00027170

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

THE EASTERN QUESTION

"The first time I had the misfortune to differ with my friends was about the year 1683, *when the Turks were besieging Vienna, and the Whigs in England, generally speaking, were for the Turks taking it—which I, having read the history of the cruelty and perfidious dealings of the Turks in their wars, and how they had rooted out the name of the Christian religion in above three score and ten kingdoms, could by no means agree with: and though then but a young man and a younger author, I opposed it and wrote against it, which was taken very unkindly."*

DANIEL DEFOE.*

* *"Life of Defoe," by George Chalmers. Defoe's Works, Edin.* 1869.

THE EASTERN QUESTION

FROM THE TREATY OF PARIS 1856 TO THE TREATY OF BERLIN 1878, AND TO THE SECOND AFGHAN WAR

By THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

TWO VOLS.—II.

27170

STRAHAN & COMPANY LIMITED
34 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

All rights reserved.

950.3
Ary/Eas
27170

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER X.

PAGE

NEGOTIATIONS SUBSEQUENT TO THE DECLARATION OF WAR, DOWN TO THE MEMORANDA WHICH PASSED BETWEEN THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, IN JULY AND AUGUST, 1877 1

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAR DOWN TO THE CONCLUSION OF AN ARMISTICE, AND RELATIVE NEGOTIATIONS, IN FEBRUARY, 1878 35

CHAPTER XII.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CONGRESS 95

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONGRESS AND THE TREATY OF BERLIN . . . 136

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN FROM THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR TO THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873 215

CHAPTER XV.

PAGE
FROM THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873 TO THE FRERE NOTE IN JANUARY, 1875 312

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM JANUARY, 1875, TO THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876 . 363

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON, IN APRIL, 1876, TO THE OPENING OF THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE ON THE 30TH JANUARY, 1877 409

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE IN JANUARY, 1877, TO THE WAR IN NOVEMBER, 1878 455

CHAPTER X.

NEGOTIATIONS SUBSEQUENT TO THE DECLARATION OF WAR, DOWN TO THE MEMORANDA WHICH PASSED BETWEEN THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, IN JULY AND AUGUST, 1877.

IT is necessary to follow in some detail the feeble attempts which were made even after the Russian declaration of war to shield Turkey from the consequences of her own conduct. In these attempts the English Cabinet as usual took a helpless part, useless for any purpose except that of showing that the Queen's Government stood alone in its estimate of the course which was consistent with the dignity of Europe, and with the absolute necessity of reform in Turkey.

It is needless to say that the English reply to Russia was received with gratitude by the Turks. On the 12th of May the Turkish Chamber of Deputies voted an address of thanks to her Majesty's Government and to the English people. "We have seen with joy," says this address, "that in their reply to the Circular of Prince Gortchakow, they embraced, as is their wont, the cause of justice, and have judged

with equity the conduct of the two parties. . . . . This decision has given us courage, and satisfaction, so that the Representative Assembly, and all who sacrifice themselves for their country, must feel that they owe the above-named Government a great debt of gratitude for having done an act of justice at a moment of such difficulty and delicacy."*

Mr. Layard had arrived at Constantinople on the 20th of April,† and had an interview with the Grand Vizier on the same evening. At this interview the British Ambassador urged that Turkey should do something to neutralise the effect of her rejection of the Protocol, which had placed her in the wrong in public opinion. He pointed to the 8th Article of the Treaty of Paris, which bound each Power before going to war to apply for the mediation of others. The advantages which Turkey gained by taking this step were farther explained by Mr. Layard in a memorandum which was submitted to the Porte. In this Paper it was pointed out that as matters then stood, "public opinion in England would not support or approve any Government that was prepared to help Turkey." It was farther urged to be "of vital importance that she should seek to change or modify this opinion." Then followed a very curious passage, which ran as follows: "If Turkey is anxious that the present state of things should

* Turkey, XXV., 1877. No. 349, Inclos., p. 266.
† Ibid., No. 205, p. 151.

cease, and that Russia should be compelled to declare war, a proposal for mediation on her (Turkey's) part would be more likely than anything else to make Russia come to a decision, and to avoid loss of time. Russia would have either to accept mediation or to refuse. In the first case she would be placing herself under the control of the Powers, who might call upon her to disarm, and Turkey might either disarm of her own free will, relying on the support of the mediating Powers, either making a condition on the subject or not, as might appear most prudent, or she might propose an immediate simultaneous disarmament as the first condition of the mediation. If Russia refused this condition, she would undoubtedly place herself in the wrong before public opinion."* Mr. Layard was careful to explain to the Porte that in thus offering to submit her cause to the consideration and decision of friendly mediating Powers she need not run any risk of compromising her independence as guaranteed to her by the Treaty of Paris, and especially recognised and upheld by England, because the Porte "might reserve all questions affecting it in the case submitted for mediation."

Although this very elaborate and ingenious scheme for making the worse appear the better cause, and for enabling Turkey to reserve everything on which she professed to appeal, was at first resisted by the Grand Vizier as inconsistent with the dignity

* Ibid., No. 211, Inclos. 1, p 162.

of the Porte, yet by the exertions of Mr. Layard with various members of the Government and of the new Chamber, it came ultimately to be favourably entertained, and on the morning of the 24th the British Ambassador learned that the Council of the Porte had finally decided on accepting his advice.* One motive which probably prevailed in the adoption of this course had been indicated by the Grand Vizier in his conversation with Mr. Layard on the 20th. That astute Turk, on being asked by the Ambassador whether he had anything to suggest which might "stave off the danger of war," answered "that had Turkey money—only (even) five million sterling—she might prolong negotiations, and time gained was always in favour of peace." Like everything else done by the Turks, even this determination to re-open negotiations came too late. Mr. Layard, as we have seen, had suggested to Turkey the expediency of forcing the hand of Russia, of putting an end to suspense, and of "compelling her to declare war." But then he had calculated that Turkey would have time to make her nominal appeal first. For he had also pointed out to the Turks that if hostilities had once commenced, the eighth article of the Treaty of Paris was no longer in vigour. But this little game of the British Ambassador was spoilt by the dilatoriness of Turkey

* Ibid., No. 211, p. 161.

and by the promptitude of Russia. The Russians, as we have seen, declared war on the 23rd, and it was not until the 24th, when the Turks were called on to reply to the Russian Declaration, that they made a formal appeal to the Powers to re-open negotiations, founding that appeal on the eighth article of the Treaty of Paris.* Even if the motive of this appeal had not been sufficiently apparent, it was obviously too late to be entertained.

Nevertheless, when the proposal was communicated to the English Foreign Secretary on the 26th of April, he intimated his opinion that it was "in strict conformity with the Treaty," although he did not anticipate that any success could attend the proposal.†

The reply of France to the Turkish application was conceived in a very different spirit. The Turks in this new appeal made no offer of conceding that which had been demanded by the Powers, all of whom had just been united in a joint mediation which had been frustrated by nothing except the pride and obstinacy of the Turks. Accordingly, the Foreign Minister of France had at once told the Turkish Ambassador in Paris that "in order to put the other Powers into a position to mediate, the Porte must set itself right with them. In short, the first step for the Porte to take was to signify its acceptance of the Protocol."‡

* Ibid., No. 140, pp. 89, 90. † Ibid., No. 147, p. 93.
‡ Ibid., No. 144, p. 92.

This was the only reply that could be given by any one of the European Governments which desired to preserve even the appearance of sincerity in the demands which they had made in common on the Porte. In the Memorandum from Turkey in which this new appeal was made there was no hint of any disposition to concede what the Powers had asked. There was, on the contrary, a defence of the refusal which had been given, and a reassertion of those doctrines of absolute independence which, under the circumstances of the case, was only a renewed insult to Europe. It is evident, however, from the language of the English Foreign Secretary, that if there had been the slightest hope of success, none of these considerations would have prevented the Cabinet from acting on the appeal of Turkey. The Porte had all along counted upon the support of the British Government, and Mr. Layard reported, on the 29th of April, that at his first official reception of the Turkish Ministers on the previous day he found among them "a conviction that in the end England would not abandon Turkey."*

On the supposition that Russia had been playing a game of selfish ambition, her success was now complete. It is difficult to say which of three prominent agencies had most effectually contributed to

* Ibid., No. 215, p. 165.

this result. The pride and obstinacy of the Porte, together with its weakness and corruption, stand first. The timidity and helplessness of the English Cabinet come next. These two causes had reacted on each other. It is only fair to the Turks to admit that the effect of English weakness had been to expose them to that kind of menace which was most offensive to them, and to which it was most difficult for them to yield. If all Europe had threatened to use compulsion they might have yielded at least without loss of dignity. But as we have seen that England had threatened not in her own name or in the name of Europe, but in the name of Russia alone, the effect was inevitable. It is impossible, indeed, to read without some sympathy and compassion the account given by Mr. Layard of his "solemn audience" with the Sultan on the 24th of April. The Turkish Sovereign spoke throughout as if Russia were really the only Power with which he had to deal. His language was:—"A great Power is determined to force me into war. He did not want war. It was Russia that was intent on driving him into it. Turkey was only defending herself from wanton aggression from an ancient hereditary and implacable enemy." This was the tone throughout. It was a perfectly natural tone, under the circumstances in which he was placed. And for those circumstances British Diplomacy was largely responsible. It had been doing nothing else for months than trading on

the threats of Russia, presuming on the Porte's sense of weakness, and declining to give to that sense of weakness the way of escape which might have been afforded by a really determined union of the Powers. On the other hand, the skill with which the game of moderation had been played by Russia herself took the best advantage of all these conditions of the case. She had carefully cut down her demands on the Porte to the basis which had been proposed by England, and had been accepted by the other Powers. She had done this by successive concessions on other demands which those Powers had confessed to be reasonable in themselves. She had helped to elicit from the English Plenipotentiary at the Congress emphatic declarations that, as a remedy for the evils of the country, the Turkish Constitution was a sham, and Turkish promises were illusory. She had farther drawn England into the signature of a Protocol, and into the approval of a separate Declaration by Russia, which two documents, when "taken in conjunction," threw the whole blame of the consequences of refusal upon Turkey. The result of the whole of these transactions was that Russia was free to declare war, with the knowledge, and with the confession of the Cabinet of London, that neither England nor any other Power was in a position, however much they might desire it, to defend the Turks against their hereditary enemy. Thus, that very consummation

was brought about which was most hostile to the legitimate interests of the rest of Europe—that consummation which the Crimean war had been fought to prevent—namely, the consummation that Russia was left undisturbed to deal, separately and alone, with the fate of Turkey.

There was just one more advantage and one more credit which it still remained for Russia to secure, and this was now afforded to her by the next step of the Government of the Queen. Hitherto England and the other Powers had at least professed to consider the cause of the subject populations of Turkey as at the root of the matter, and as a cause which they were bound to promote. Russia had, indeed, long appeared as the only Power which was prepared to prosecute this cause at the expense of war. But, up to this time at least, no confession had been made that this cause might be dropped out of the account altogether, or that it was esteemed of no value as compared with other interests purely selfish. That Russia should be enabled to say not only that she was the only Power which would fight for this cause, but that she was the only Power which even professed to care for it, was a triumph which she could not have expected. Yet this, too, was given to her. The English Government gave it by the publication—the ostentatious publication—of a despatch setting forth the position of Great Britain in the contest which was now approaching, and in so framing that despatch

as to eliminate all reference, however remote, to the cause of reform in Turkey, or to the welfare and interests of the subject populations.

Celebrated as this despatch became, as the official definition of "British interests," it is not half-celebrated enough. Its ingenious impolicy was sufficiently apparent at the time, but it acquires additional lustre in the light of subsequent events. I give it here in full :—

The Earl of Derby to Count Schouvalow.

"Foreign Office, May 6, 1877.

"M. L'AMBASSADEUR,—

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Excellency's letter of the 6th instant, in which you inform me that you are about to proceed to Russia on a short leave of absence.

"As your Excellency will then doubtless have an opportunity of personally conferring with your Government, I take this occasion of placing before them some considerations of importance to the future good understanding between Great Britain and Russia.

"Her Majesty's Government do not propose again to enter on the question of the justice or necessity of the present war ; they have already expressed their views with regard to it, and further discussion would be unavailing. They have accepted the obligations which a state of war imposed upon them, and have lost no time in issuing a Proclamation of Neutrality. They, from the first, warned the Porte

that it must not look to them for assistance, and they are determined to carry impartially into effect the policy thus announced, so long as Turkish interests alone are involved.

"At the same time they think it right that there should be no misunderstanding as to their position and intentions. Should the war now in progress unfortunately spread, interests may be imperilled which they are equally bound and determined to defend, and it is desirable that they should make it clear, so far as at the outset of the war can be done, what the most prominent of those interests are.

"Foremost among them is the necessity of keeping open, uninjured and uninterrupted, the communication between Europe and the East by the Suez Canal. An attempt to blockade or otherwise to interfere with the Canal or its approaches would be regarded by them as a menace to India, and as a grave injury to the commerce of the world. On both these grounds any such step—which they hope and fully believe there is no intention on the part of either belligerent to take—would be inconsistent with the maintenance by them of an attitude of passive neutrality.

"The mercantile and financial interests of European nations are also so largely involved in Egypt that an attack on that country, or its occupation, even temporarily for purposes of war, could scarcely be regarded with unconcern by the neutral Powers, certainly not by England.

"The vast importance of Constantinople, whether in a military, a political, or a commercial point of

view, is too well understood to require explanation. It is, therefore, scarcely necessary to point out that her Majesty's Government are not prepared to witness with indifference the passing into other hands than those of its present possessors, of a Capital holding so peculiar and commanding a position.

"The existing arrangements made under the European sanction which regulate the navigation of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, appear to them wise and salutary, and there would be, in their judgment, serious objections to their alteration in any material particular.

"Her Majesty's Government have thought it right thus frankly to indicate their views. The course of events might show that there were still other interests, as, for instance, on the Persian Gulf, which it would be their duty to protect; but they do not doubt that they will have sufficiently pointed out to your Excellency the limits within which they hope that the war may be confined, or, at all events, those within which they themselves would be prepared, so far as present circumstances allow of an opinion being formed, to maintain a policy of abstention and neutrality.

"They feel confident that the Emperor of Russia will appreciate their desire to make their policy understood at the outset of the war, and thus to respond to the assurances given by his Imperial Majesty at Livadia, and published at your Excellency's request, when he pledged his word of honour that he had no intention of acquiring Constantinople, and that, if necessity should oblige him to occupy a portion of Bulgaria, it would only be provisionally.

and until the peace and safety of the Christian population were secured.

"Her Majesty's Government cannot better show their confidence in these Declarations of his Imperial Majesty than by requesting your Excellency to be so good as to convey to the Emperor and the Russian Government the frank explanations of British policy which I have had the honour of thus offering to you. "I have, &c.

(Signed) "DERBY."*

It will be observed that in this despatch, not only is there the total omission of all reference to the welfare of the subject-populations of Turkey, but also that there is a most inadequate account even of those larger political interests which were clearly endangered by the possible action of Russia. The interests enumerated are those which concerned England alone, or England especially, to the total omission of many other interests which were common to Europe. Not one word is said of the ultimate disposal of the European provinces of Turkey, exclusive of Constantinople. The Emperor is indeed reminded of his promise that his military occupation of a portion of the country would be only temporary. But not one word is said of the danger of exclusive Russian dealing with the institutions of Bulgaria and of Roumelia, or the establishment of a Russian protectorate over these provinces. Nothing that did not touch England to the exclusion

* Russia, II., 1877.

of other Powers, and especially the real or supposed interests of her Indian Empire, is even mentioned in this extraordinary despatch. And this is the more remarkable as in the very nature of the case a Paper which professed to set forth and enumerate the interests which might affect the future action of England, implied that all other interests not enumerated (except as covered by a saving clause of the vaguest character), were left to be dealt with according to events. It is indeed the fitting close of that long series of negotiations which we have traced in the previous chapters.

It is needless to say that Russia took immediate and effective advantage of the opportunity thus afforded to her. On the 12th of May the Despatch setting forth the position of England was answered by another Despatch setting forth the position of Russia. Her sole championship of all that was of interest to the subject populations, and through them to the ultimate peace of Europe, was brought prominently into view. This position was expressed and defined with undeniable truth and with conspicuous moderation in the following despatch from Prince Gortchakow to the Russian Ambassador in London :—

(*Translation.*)

"St. Petersburg, May $\frac{15}{30}$, 1877.

"M. LE COMTE,—

"Your Excellency has been entrusted by Lord Derby with a letter which develops the views

of the English Cabinet as regards the questions which might be implicated in the present war, and would affect interests that England ought to defend.

"His Majesty the Emperor has perused it with deep interest, and appreciates the frankness of explanations, the object of which is to remove misunderstandings between the two Governments.

"Our august Master instructs me to respond with complete reciprocity by putting you in a position to develop with equal frankness and equal clearness our own views, both on the points raised by Lord Derby and on those that affect interests which his Imperial Majesty is bound on his side to protect.

"The Imperial Cabinet will neither blockade, nor interrupt, nor in any way menace the navigation of the Suez Canal. They consider the Canal as an international work, in which the commerce of the world is interested, and which should be kept free from any attack.

"Egypt is a part of the Ottoman Empire, and its contingents figure in the Turkish army. Russia might, therefore, consider herself as at war with Egypt. Nevertheless, the Imperial Cabinet does not overlook either the European interests engaged in the country or those of England in particular. They will not bring Egypt within the radius of their military operations.

"As far as concerns Constantinople, without being able to prejudge the course or issue of the war, the Imperial Cabinet repeats that the acquisition of that capital is excluded from the views of his Majesty the Emperor. They recognise that, in any case, the future of Constantinople is a question of common

interest, which cannot be settled otherwise than by a general understanding, and that if the possession of that city were to be put in question, it could not be allowed to belong to any of the European Powers.

"As regards the Straits, although their two shores belong to the same Sovereign, they form the only outlet of two great seas in which all the world has interests. It is, therefore, important, in the interests of peace and of the general balance of power, that this question should be settled by a common agreement on equitable and efficiently guaranteed bases.

"Lord Derby has alluded to other British interests which might be affected by the eventual extension of the war, such as the Persian Gulf and the route to India. The Imperial Cabinet declares that it will not extend the war beyond what is required for the loudly and clearly declared object for which his Majesty the Emperor was obliged to take up arms. They will respect the British interests mentioned by Lord Derby as long as England remains neutral.

"They have a right to expect that the English Government will, on their side, in like manner take into fair consideration the particular interests which Russia has at stake in this war, and in view of which she has imposed such great sacrifices on herself.

"These consist in the absolute necessity of putting an end to the deplorable condition of the Christians under Turkish rule and to the chronic state of disturbance provoked by it.

"This state of things, and the acts of violence resulting from it, excite in Russia an agitation caused

by the Christian feeling so profound in the Russian people, and by the ties of faith and race which unite them to a great part of the Christian population of Turkey. The Imperial Government is the more obliged to take account of this since it reacts both on the internal and external situation of the Empire. At each of these crises the policy of Russia is suspected and accused, and her international relations, her commerce, her finances, and her credit are affected.

"His Majesty the Emperor cannot leave Russia indefinitely exposed to these disastrous accidents, which check her peaceful development and cause her incalculable injury.

"It is in order to dry up their source that his Imperial Majesty has decided to impose upon his country the burden of the war.

"The object cannot be attained unless the Christian populations of Turkey are placed in a position in which their existence and security will be effectually guaranteed against the intolerable abuses of Turkish administration. This interest, which is a vital one for Russia, is not opposed to any of the interests of Europe, which suffers, too, on her side, from the precarious state of the East.

"The Imperial Cabinet endeavoured to attain the desired end with the co-operation of the friendly and allied Powers.

"Forced now to pursue it alone, our august Master is resolved not to lay down his arms without having completely, surely, and effectually guaranteed it.

"Be good enough to lay these views before Lord Derby, stating to him that the Imperial Cabinet has

a right to hope that the Government of her Britannic Majesty will appreciate them with the same spirit of fairness that induces us to respect the interests of England, and that they will draw from them the same conclusion as ourselves—namely, that there is nothing in the views that have been exchanged with reciprocal frankness between the two Governments which cannot be reconciled so as to maintain their amicable relations, and the peace of the East and of Europe.

" Receive, &c.

(Signed) " GORTCHAKOW."

So far as this correspondence goes it cannot be denied that Russia appears as taking the highest ground, and that the Queen's Government on the contrary appears as taking the very lowest. Every interest in the great Eastern Question which was general and European, as distinguished from interests predominantly or purely English, was neglected and abandoned. Russia was left the immense advantage of appearing as the only Power able and willing to redeem the subject populations of Turkey from the curse of centuries, and the not less conspicuous advantage of being able to advance her own interests without let or hindrance in the execution of this work.

Two months elapsed between the declaration of war and the successful passage of the Danube by the Russian army. That passage was not effected till the last week in June. During this interval diplomacy

was not wholly silent. The Ministers and Ambassadors of England had one more opportunity of exhibiting their sense of the political situation. On the 8th of June the Russian Ambassador had a confidential conversation with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and made to him a most important communication. This was no less than an explanation, made with the utmost frankness, of certain conditions on which Russia would still be willing to conclude a peace, and a farther explanation equally frank of the very different conditions upon which she might insist if she were compelled to fight her way across the Balkans.

In the first place, it was distinctly explained to the Cabinet of London that in this last event Russia would not bind herself against advancing on the Turkish Capital. All that she was willing to give a pledge against on this subject was the "taking possession of the town or occupying it permanently." It was pointed out that the obstinacy of the Turks might compel Russia to pursue the war to the walls of Constantinople; and if the Turks knew beforehand that they were to be guaranteed against such a result it would only lead to a prolongation of the war. England, however, might be fully assured that under no circumstances would Russia remain at Constantinople. It would depend very much upon England and the other Powers to relieve Russia from the necessity of even approaching that city. Let them induce Turkey to

accept reasonable terms of peace, and this object would be effected.

The Ambassador then proceeded to indicate what these terms were, and in doing so, he took care once more to set forth in the plainest terms the narrow aims of the policy avowed by England, as contrasted with the broader and larger interests of which Russia was the champion. It is not pleasant for any subject of the Queen to read the definition given of British policy by the Russian Ambassador in this conversation, as contrasted with the accompanying definition of the policy of Russia, and to find that it appears to have been received without one word of remonstrance by the Secretary of State. There was no affectation or pretence that Russia had not her own legitimate interests to secure. Her military honour and her position as a great Power must be vindicated. But these are carefully connected with the interests of the subject populations, and through them with objects which all the other Powers had admitted and declared to be objects of general desire. "What is necessary to England," said Count Schouvalow, "is the maintenance in principle of the Ottoman Empire and the inviolability of Constantinople and the Straits." "What is absolutely necessary to Russia," said the same authority, "is that she should put an end to the continual crises in the East, firstly, by establishing the superiority of her arms so thoroughly that in future the Turks will not be tempted to defy her

lightly; and secondly, by placing the Christians, especially those of Bulgaria, in a position which would effectually guarantee them against the abuses of Turkish administration."

This general description of the Russian basis was further developed by specific explanations of the terms demanded. And it is very remarkable to observe that these terms would have avoided any exclusive Protectorate of Russia over the provinces whose liberties would nevertheless have been entirely due to her firmness. They demanded autonomy for Bulgaria north of the Balkans. But it was still to be vassal to the Porte, and it was to be under the guarantee not of Russia, but of Europe. Bulgaria, south of the Balkans, was also to be assured, under the same guarantee, such securities for good Government as might be agreed upon with the other Powers. Bosnia and Herzegovina were to be dealt with on the same principle, and the preponderating interest of Austria-Hungary in the organisation of these provinces was recognised. Montenegro and Servia were to receive some increase of territory. Servia was to remain as it had been, vassal to the Porte; and the ambition of Roumania to be declared independent was to be considered by Europe as a whole. On these terms—terms identified with the acknowledged interests, not of Russia only, but of Europe—the Russian Ambassador intimated that Turkey might even then have peace.

One only further reservation was made, and the early communication of it to England was at least frank and candid on the part of Russia. As compensation for the costs of war already incurred, Russia would stipulate for certain special advantages, which, however, would not exceed the retrocession of that part of Bessarabia which had been taken from her by the Treaty of Paris in 1856,* and the cession of Batoum, with its adjacent territory.

These terms were confidentially communicated at the same time to Germany and to Austria-Hungary.† It was, however, expressly stipulated by Russia that if England refused to enter upon a negotiation on this basis, it was not to be communicated to the Porte at all. Russia did not profess to entertain the smallest expectation that Turkey would assent to these terms unless compelled to do so. But she did wish to assure herself of the neutrality of England by an open declaration both as to the terms with which she would be content if peace were made then, and by a declaration equally open that if compelled to fight her way across the Balkans, she could not be bound by the same terms.

The course taken by the English Cabinet was to express no opinion of its own, but to consult Mr. Layard as to what he thought of the probability of the

---

* Turkey, XV., 1878, No. 1, pp. 3, 4.
† Ibid., No. 4, p. 6.

Porte consenting to the Russian terms.* This was done by telegraph on the 12th of June, and the reply of Mr. Layard was written on the following day. That reply was that it would be "even dangerous to suggest the Russian terms to the Sultan or his Ministers at the present moment." He then entered into an analysis of the terms, pointing out the objections which Turkey would entertain to every one of them. These objections were stated from the Turkish point of view with force and fervour. To establish an autonomous Bulgaria north of the Balkans, with the Danubian fortresses destroyed, with the Turkish armies excluded, and the province placed under the guarantee of Europe, would be to lay the foundation not only for its speedy and complete independence, but for its union with Servia, and the consequent extension of Russian influence over the whole Slav population of Turkey. Greece would be encouraged to invade Thessaly and Epirus. A large Mohammedan population would be handed over to Christian government. Bosnia and Herzegovina would be cut off from the rest of Turkey, and with their new institutions would be practically lost to the Empire. The cession of Batoum would be handing over to Russia the key of Armenia and of all Asia Minor. To propose such terms would be fatal to whatever influence yet remained to England

* Ibid., No. 6, p. 6.

at Constantinople. "We should be looked upon as greater enemies to Turkey and to Islamism than Russia herself, as false friends, and traitors."*

In the meantime, on the 14th of June, before this reply had been received in England, the Russian Ambassador had intimated that on reconsideration Russia must make one important modification of the terms to be demanded. She found on examination that the separation of Bulgaria into two provinces was practically impossible. Local information proved that it must remain one province, otherwise the most laborious and intelligent part of the Bulgarian population, and notably that which had suffered most from Turkish maladministration, would remain excluded from autonomous institutions.

The calmness of the Foreign Secretary was not much disturbed by this communication But when it was reported to Mr. Layard, it drew from that diplomatist, on the 19th June, a vehement despatch, denouncing over again the terms as a whole, and this addition in particular. To do Mr. Layard justice, he had clearly an intelligible policy of his own. His contempt for the merely negative and listless attitude of his Government is but thinly veiled. He would have supported Turkey: and he would have supported her on the good old doctrine that whatever

* Ibid., No. 8, pp. 7, 8.

might be her faults or vices, the maintenance of her power was necessary to the interests of England. The passage in which this superstition is expressed is so vigorous, and is so probably the last and latest expression of it by an able man, that I reproduce it here :—

"I would venture to urge most earnestly upon her Majesty's Government not to be the medium of communicating, or of suggesting, any such terms as those proposed by Prince Gortchakow to the Sultan or to the Porte. The Russian Chancellor's language does not admit the possibility of a mediation. It is simply that of dictation. The terms offered are to be accepted at once, or the consequences will be a further dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Let some other Power accept this task. It is vital to our gravest interests, to interests the importance of which no words can adequately describe, much less exaggerate, that we should be ready to interpose to save the Turkish Empire from complete dissolution. If we have even determined to abandon it to its fate, we have not determined to abandon to the same fate the highest interests of the British Empire. Surely the policy which has hitherto made us support Turkey for our own purposes and safety, and for no abstract love of Turks or their faith, a policy approved and adopted by the greatest statesmen that England has produced, is not one which the events of the last few months, having no relation whatever to it, are sufficient to reverse. That policy was partly based upon the belief that Turkey is a barrier to the ambi-

tious designs of Russia in the East, and that the Sultan, the acknowledged head of the Mohammedan faith, is a useful, if not necessary, ally to England, which has millions of Mussulmans amongst her subjects. He may be deprived of his Empire, and may be reduced to the condition of a fifth-rate Asiatic Potentate; but he will still be the Caliph of Islam, and the Mussulman world, in a struggle for very existence, may turn upon England as the principal cause of the danger that threatens it. Some persons, not without authority, are, I am aware, disposed to treat this consideration lightly; but I am persuaded from what I see passing around me, and from what I have learnt, that it is one which we ought seriously to bear in mind.

"It is scarcely necessary to dwell, in this place, upon the result of the breaking up and partition of the Ottoman Empire on the balance of power, or upon the great danger to liberty and civilisation of the establishment of a vast military Slav Empire in the east of Europe.

"If her Majesty's Government are of opinion that there is nothing to be done to oppose the designs of Russia, we should, at least, be prepared to mediate when the time comes. In order to be in a position to do so, we should make Turkey feel that although, as we have warned her, she cannot expect any help from us in her struggle with Russia, we shall be ready, at a favourable moment, to do our best to see that she be treated with justice and moderation, and her Mohammedan and Christian subjects alike with impartiality and equal humanity. It has been my object to raise such hopes, as I have none others to

give, without committing in any way her Majesty's Government, whose views and policy it is my duty to consider and carry out. It is the only course left to us if we are not prepared to give Turkey even such indirect aid as the preservation and maintenance of our own national and imperial interests may render necessary. By following it we may recover and maintain a part of that great and preponderating influence—I hesitate to use a word which has been so indignantly denounced as 'prestige'—which England once enjoyed amongst the Mussulman, and even Christian, nations and communities of the East, and which she was able to use most effectively for their good and her own."*

There is only one opinion of Mr. Layard, as expressed in these despatches, in which we can all agree. "Were Russia over the Danube," he said in his reply of the 13th of June, "and at the Balkan Passes, and were she in possession of Armenia, there might be grounds for forming a different opinion to that which I have now expressed." This was quite true. It meant that nothing short of the military success of Russia could bring home to the mind of Turkey, and of the Turkish party in England, that the time had come to abandon her claims to absolute independence. The knot was left to be cut by the sword. But it is not the less important to observe that from this early date, before as yet the

* Ibid., No. 10, pp. 9, 10.

Russians had crossed the Danube, England and Europe were offered the opportunity of enforcing on the Porte, in so far as they could or would, terms of peace which were generally in accordance with the demands which they had themselves made upon the Porte ; and, moreover, that the Powers of Europe had due notice given to them that even then Russia had determined to demand the restoration of her old Bessarabian frontier, and in Asia the cession of Batoum. Moreover, it is equally important to observe that this intimation had been received by the English Government without, so far as appears, one word of remonstrance or protest.

And now once more we find the Cabinet of the Queen waiting on the steps and relying on the strength of Russia. On the 27th of June the Russian armies had, at three separate points, completed the passage of the Danube. Possibly this success might make the Turks more willing to concede what had been required by England and by Europe. It was as well to try. Accordingly on the following day the Foreign Secretary authorised Mr. Layard to sound the Sultan on the subject of terms of peace. He was to be assured that he might rely on the friendly offices of the Queen's Government with a view to obtain for him "the most favourable possible terms under the circumstances."*

Probably it is fortunate for Europe that this

* Ibid., No. 11, p. 11

attempt also failed. The "most favourable terms possible" for the Turks could not have been the most favourable terms possible for the subject populations, or for the permanent interests of peace in the east of Europe. Mr. Layard, however, was not called upon to answer this instruction till the 2nd of August, and in the meantime important military events had occurred. On the 7th of July, the Russians had captured Tirnova, and a week later General Gourko had made his celebrated dash across the Balkans. But, on the other hand, Osman Pasha had entered Plevna on the 19th, and on the 21st had established himself so firmly within his now famous lines that he was enabled to repulse the first Russian assault. On the 30th of July the second attack had been repelled with still more disastrous results to the army of the Czar. In Asia, also, after the capture of Ardahan so early as the 17th of May, the Russian forces had met with serious reverses. When, therefore, on the 2nd of August, Mr. Layard had to reply to the instruction he had received on the subject of peace, he was obliged to report that the Turks were confidently expecting to drive the enemy out of Bulgaria and Roumelia, as he had already been driven out of Armenia. It is not the first time in the history of the world that the foregone conclusions of a great contest have been obscured by temporary causes suggesting idle expectations of a different result.

It was during this period of the contest that some important communications took place with Russia through Colonel Wellesley, who represented the English War Office at the head-quarters of the army of the Czar. On the 20th of July, the Emperor, in referring to some false accusations made by the Turks against the Russian army, took occasion to intimate to that officer that, although he would not suspend military operations, he was still ready to treat for peace, if the Sultan would make suitable propositions.

This message was received in London on the 27th of July, the very day on which the Russian army crossed the Danube. On the following day the Cabinet of the Queen responded by communicating to the Russian Ambassador a Memorandum of their views. In this Paper the same tone was continued which we have traced throughout—the tone, namely, of representing the whole quarrel as one between Russia and Turkey. In this tone her Majesty's Government assured the Emperor that they would be "ready to use their influence in concert with the other Powers to induce the Porte to terminate the present disastrous war by acceding to such terms of peace as shall be at once honourable to Russia, and yet such as the Sultan can accept."* It was then farther intimated that the Queen's

* Turkey, IX., 1878, No. 2.

Government looked with much anxiety at the prospect of disorder, bloodshed, and even anarchy at Constantinople, if the Russian forces should draw nearer to that Capital. England was fully determined not to depart from the line of neutrality which the Government had declared their intention to observe, unless any deviation from it should be necessary for the preservation of interests which had already been defined. But the Queen's Government would not consider that they were departing from neutrality, nor would Russia consider that they were doing so, if they should find themselves compelled to direct the British Fleet to proceed to Constantinople and "thus afford protection to the European population against internal disturbance." It was anxiously explained at the same time that no decision had then been taken in favour of such a proceeding. But her Majesty's Government was desirous that "in the event of its being necessary no misunderstanding should arise as to their intentions, and that the Government of Russia should not be taken by surprise."

Again, on the 30th of July, the Emperor of Russia made some further remarks to Colonel Wellesley, which he authorised that officer to communicate to his Government. These remarks conveyed the following important declarations:—1st, That the object of the war was solely the amelioration of the condition of the Christian population of Turkey; 2nd, That the conditions of peace then demanded by

Russia remained the same as those lately explained to the British Cabinet by Count Schouvalow; 3rd, That the Emperor had no idea of annexation beyond perhaps the territory lost in Bessarabia by the Treaty of 1856, and a certain portion of Asia Minor; 4th, That the Emperor would not occupy Constantinople for the sake of military honour, but only if such a step were rendered necessary by the march of events; 5th, That the Emperor was still ready to treat for peace if the Sultan would offer suitable proposals, but that he could not accept the mediation of any Power on behalf of Turkey; 6th, That Europe would be invited to a Conference for the formal settlement of the conditions of peace; 7th, That the Emperor had not the slightest wish to interfere with any one of the British interests which had been specified—Constantinople, Egypt, the Suez Canal, or India; 8th, That a temporary occupation of Bulgaria would be necessary; 9th, That the Emperor feared that the present policy of England only tended to encourage the Turks, and consequently to prolong the war, whereas if the influence of England were brought to bear upon the Porte, the Sultan would be ready to come to terms, and thus a war regretted by all Europe would be brought to a speedy conclusion.* '

The reply of the English Government to this message was in the same form—namely, in that of

* Ibid., No. 3, Inclos., p. 2.

a Memorandum to be communicated to the Emperor by Colonel Wellesley. It was dated August 14th.* The only sentence of any importance is the first—in which the Queen's Government intimate their satisfaction that the Emperor disclaimed any "extensive" ideas of annexation—a sentence which involves tacit acquiescence in those not "extensive" annexations which were then very clearly indicated, and which were afterwards so violently denounced in England. This sentence was as follows:—"They have received with satisfaction the statement made by his Majesty as to the object of the war in which he is engaged, his disclaimer of any extensive ideas of annexation and his readiness to enter into negotiations for peace. They are grateful for the assurance which he has given of his intentions to respect the interests of England." The Queen's Government then proceeded to disclaim the influence with the Porte which had been attributed to them by the Emperor, and pleaded that since the Turks had ceased to hope for the military support of England "the position of the British Government, in Turkish opinion, is no longer that of protectors who must be conciliated at any cost, but of neutrals from whom neither assistance nor hostility is to be anticipated." The Memorandum then proceeded thus, in direct allusion to the defeats which Russia had sustained:—

* Ibid., p. 3.

"The military events which have occurred since the date of the communication made by the Emperor to Col. Wellesley will have necessarily indisposed the Turkish Government to entertain any propositions of peace except on conditions such as it is unlikely that the Russian Government could accept."

Here, again, it will be observed, the whole stress is laid not on the justice or necessity of the proposed terms with reference to the condition of the subject populations of Turkey, but exclusively on the acceptability of those terms to Russia.

The principal importance, however, of these Memoranda lies in the proof which they afford that Russia was, even at this early period of the contest, singularly open and unreserved to us, as regarded the probable extent of her demands, if her arms should be attended with success. So far as cessions of territory were concerned, these Memoranda show that the British Government had from this time full notice of the Emperor's intentions. The retrocession of Bessarabia speaks for itself. The "certain portion of Asia Minor" might mean anything. It could only mean, at least, the acquisition of Batoum. It might mean a great deal more. In full possession of this knowledge, the Cabinet of the Queen was silent.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAR DOWN TO THE CONCLUSION OF AN ARMISTICE, AND RELATIVE NEGOTIATIONS, IN FEBRUARY, 1878.

THE check which the Russian armies had sustained both in Asia and Europe, during the months of July and August, was indeed quite sufficient to inspire with hope the Turks and their friends in England. These hopes, however, were doomed to speedy disappointment. In the beginning of September the tide began to turn, and in the middle of the following month the main current of this eventful history became visible to all observers. The bombardment of Plevna began on the 7th of September, and on the 11th the Gravitza redoubt was taken. But it was not till the 15th of October that a great victory, secured in Asia, gave token of the end. On that day the Turkish army was overthrown on the Aladja Dagh, with one of those great routs which are decisive of the fate of more than a campaign. This triumph in Asia was

followed on the 29th of October by the complete investiture of Plevna. Another period of twenty days brings us down to the fall of Kars, which was taken by the Russian forces on the 19th of November. But it was not till the 10th of December that the gallant Osman Pasha marched a captive out of the lines of Plevna, after a defence perhaps as brilliant as any recorded in the history of war.

It forms no part of the object of this work to follow the events of the war in so far as these were of a purely military character. Some of them, however, have a bearing more or less important upon the fundamental question of the condition and character of the Turkish Empire. The decline of its military power has been but a symptom and a consequence of its decline in all that constitutes the vitality of nations. Nobody, perhaps, will now contend that the events of the late war, taken as a whole, gave any indication that this decline had been arrested. But, unquestionably, during the months of July, August, and part of September, the friends of Turkey were jubilant over her military successes, and loudly declared that these were of such a character as to indicate a great revival. It was denied that the ability of Turkish generals was confined to the defence of strong positions. It was asserted that they had shown vigour, and had attained success in the open field. It was triumphantly predicted that the Russians would be compelled to retreat

across the Danube. And even now, when this tone has been silenced by ultimate results, the impression remains on many minds that the defeat of Turkey was due entirely to the overwhelming forces which Russia was able to hurl upon her, and that in the conduct of her defensive campaign Turkey showed not only a courage but a skill which was deserving of a better fate.

That the men of the Turkish armies, and in many cases their officers also, displayed great courage, and great powers of endurance, is unquestionably true. Nor is this fact to be treated lightly, or with undue depreciation of all that it may involve. Mr. Bright, in a recent speech, spoke of physical courage as an article of which more might be had for a shilling a-day than of any other article with which he was acquainted. The sarcasm, though strictly founded upon fact, cannot affect the universal feeling of mankind. That feeling rests upon an instinct which, like all other instincts, has its seat and its justification in the nature of things. The willingness of men to sacrifice their lives at the call of duty, or, in other words, at the command of legitimate authority, is the highest witness both to the value of human life, and to the still higher value of that which may call us to lay it down. Physical courage, however common it may be, and however capable of it almost all men, under drill and discipline, are found to be, has never failed, and will never cease to be

the object of sympathy and admiration. In this war it was displayed with equal brilliancy by every one of the races which were engaged. The Servian and Roumanian contingents, which ultimately joined in the contest, displayed it as remarkably as the Turks and Russians. They displayed it, too, under conditions which of all others are perhaps the most trying. The attack on strongly fortified positions defended by men armed with the modern weapons of precision, is a kind of attack in which the probability of death is at a maximum, and in which the incitements to courage are at a minimum. The foe is unseen and under shelter. The storming parties are entirely uncovered. They have often considerable distances to traverse during which the carnage is visible and dreadful. In this war there was the prospect—much more dreadful than that of being killed in battle—of a cruel death inflicted by the Turks in cold blood upon the wounded, in the event of the attack being repulsed. That this was the habitual practice of the Turkish soldiery is attested by eye-witnesses without number. Yet under all these aggravated circumstances, not merely of danger but of horror, whole columns of men, unused to war, flung themselves unflinchingly against the redoubts of Plevna. The Turks, exposed to the same danger, but not under the same risks of cruelty, dashed with equal determination, and with equal slaughter, against the Russian fortifications in the Shipka Pass.

So far, therefore, as the mere quality of physical courage is concerned, no inferences can be drawn either comparatively favourable or unfavourable to Turkey from the events of the late war.

When, however, we come to review the military conduct of the war as a whole, it is vain to deny that it confirmed in a most striking degree the decline of Turkey as a military Power. Some of the very best generals in the service of the Porte, with a large part of its regular army, were not only kept at bay for many months, but were at last completely defeated by the little bands of indomitable Montenegro. It is not too much to say that this is a result discreditable, if not actually disgraceful, to the arms of the Sultan. Even in the war with Servia in 1876, although the Turkish forces were ultimately victorious, the triumph cannot be rated very high, considering the raw and untrained levies to which alone they were opposed. As regards questions of purely military strategy it would be absurd for a civilian to express any opinion, except that kind of opinion which rests upon the proof furnished by events. But this is a kind of proof which does justify conclusions of the most important kind. I recollect hearing Macaulay on one occasion give an effective reply to a critic who objected to an opinion he had expressed on a military question. "You are judging," said the critic, "by the event." "Of course I am judging by the event," Macaulay replied;

"how do I know that Wellington was a better general than Soult except by the fact that Soult was beaten by Wellington?" And surely in the case of this Russo-Turkish war there were some results which leave no doubt as to the conduct of the campaign by the Turkish generals. When the Russian army was so seriously defeated in its first attack on Plevna that for a time at least it seemed to be demoralised, it was confidently expected that the Turkish army which rested upon Schumla would have pressed on the left flank of the Russian position and compelled a retreat across the Danube. So great was the failure in this expectation, and in others of a like kind, that it has been ascribed to corruption or treachery on the part of the Turkish generals, or to their jealousy of each other. It was observed with apparent truth that if the columns which during weeks and weeks were dashed in vain against the Shipka Pass had been used to reinforce the army of the Lom very different results might have been attained. And even as regards the action of Osman Pasha in seizing and fortifying Plevna, the brilliancy of his defence must not blind us to the grave doubts which attend his strategy. It does not seem to be a great triumph of military genius to place a whole army in such a position that in the event of defeat there could be no retreat, and no other resource than unconditional surrender. Or if Osman Pasha had any good reason to hope that he could be relieved by any force so

large as to enable him to take the offensive, or even to cover his retreat, what becomes of the reputation of that military Empire which suffered these hopes to be disappointed?

On the whole, then, the result of the war has been to show that whilst there appears to be no deterioration in the fighting qualities of the Turkish soldier, there has been in Turkey no reform of the administrative system on which the success of campaigns depends, and no revival of that military genius to which the Turks owed their conquests and establishment in Europe.

But there are some of the military events of that war which cannot be passed over in any narrative which has in view the light cast by those events on the character and condition of the Turkish Empire. And especially amongst its most terrible and instructive episodes, it is necessary to refer to the dash across the Balkans which was made by General Gourko in the middle of July, 1877. It is difficult to know how far officers of this class, in the midst of a campaign, act under the immediate direction of the Commander-in-chief. It is still more difficult to know how far even the Commander-in-chief of an army engaged in active operations in the field feels himself under any obligation to take into consideration the political consequences of any given movement. But in a war such as that which was then being waged by Russia against Turkey—a

war in which political considerations were all important—a war undertaken with the express aim and object of relieving subject-populations from a corrupt and oppressive Government,—it was the bounden duty of the Russian authorities to abstain from any military movement not absolutely essential to the safety of the army, which ran any serious and needless risk of aggravating the horrors of the war. It has been said, indeed, in a very interesting letter from Lord Melgund,* who was at that time present with the Turkish Army, that Raouf Pasha's force, which was at first the only force opposed to General Gourko, was thoroughly demoralised, and that if the Russian General had made his attack one week earlier, he would certainly have succeeded in the capture of Adrianople. He was only compelled to retreat by the timely arrival of Suleiman Pasha with the battalions which had been vainly employed against Montenegro. But the Russians had no right to count upon such a chance as this ; and it was their duty to consider the terrible and the certain results of failure. This duty was grievously violated by sending across the Balkans, into Southern Bulgaria, a Russian force which was wholly insufficient to occupy or to hold the country—which, in fact, could do nothing but make a raid—and which, having first compromised a large

* Published in the *Times* newspaper about the 12th or 13th of October, 1877.

native population, had then immediately to retreat and leave them to the vengeance of the Turks. This was the character and the result of General Gourko's expedition, and the worst horrors of the war were directly due to it.

I shall not enter here into the continual disputes which have arisen whether the Cossacks and armed Bulgarians did or did not commit cruelties as aggravated, in proportion to their opportunities, as those committed by Turkish Irregulars—the Circassians and the Bashi-Bazouks. This is the favourite hunting-ground of men, who, in the great pursuit of politics, are ever running upon false scents, and stopping to dig out all the little vermin that cross the field of view. In the present case they think they are defending the policy which delivered up the Eastern Question into the hands of Russia, if they can prove that Russians are as barbarous as Turks. If this were so, it could only serve to aggravate the censure due to the Cabinets who abandoned their own duties in the East of Europe, with the effect of enabling and entitling Russia to take them up. But, even in this by-path of inquiry, the friends of Turkey are not successful. The civilisation of Russia is indeed very far behind our own. But it is two centuries at least in advance of the civilisation of Turkey. I say nothing of the sap which is flowing in the one, and of the rot which is visibly affecting every fibre of the other. Those who read the accounts from all sides, which have been furnished by

Mr. Layard, and who remember as an absolute rule that nothing is to be believed on either side except such facts as are vouched for by the direct or indirect evidence of European witnesses, will have no difficulty in making up their minds as to which of the two parties was the most savage throughout the contest. The united testimony of all the foreign officers at the head-quarters of the Russian army proves that as a rule and on the whole it conducted the war humanely to the wounded and to the captives. The same evidence proves that the Turks habitually killed the wounded, whilst the correspondents of the European press united on more than one occasion to testify to the barbarous mutilations which were practised by the soldiers of the Sultan upon the dead, and too probably also on the dying. The insignificant number of prisoners who ever came under the charge of the Turkish Government is a sufficient indication and a crucial test of the barbarous conduct of its soldiery. These facts were so well established that they became the subject of formal remonstrance with the Porte from other Powers. On the 18th of August the German Ambassador in London called on the Foreign Secretary and "read a telegram from his Government stating that the German officers at the Russian head-quarters have corroborated the statements made that in the battles at Plevna and in the Balkans the Russian soldiers who fell into the hands

of the Turkish regular troops were mutilated and killed. The German Government thinks this contrary to the Genevan Convention, which was adhered to by the Porte."* It will be observed that this charge does not refer to one battle only, but to many, and that it does not refer to the Irregulars, but expressly to the Regulars of the Turkish army. But the consequences of General Gourko's raid are of a special kind. They involve the direct action of the Turkish Government during a long period of time; and they cast light upon the most important of all questions—namely, the question: What would have been the result of the defeat of Russia in the war, and of the establishment of unrestrained Turkish power over the subject-populations of Bulgaria?

The facts so far as attested by direct European evidence may be very shortly stated—first, as given in the letter of two American missionaries to Mr. Layard, dated August 14th, 1877;† and secondly, as given by the reports of Consul-General Fawcett, and others who visited the districts at a later date. The two American missionaries were present at Eski-Zaghra; and from their narrative the facts seem to have been these:—

General Gourko crossed the Balkans on the 14th

---

* Turkey, I., 1878, No. 216, p. 167.

† Ibid., No. 228. Inclos. p. 195.

of July, at the Hain Pass. This news reached the city of Eski-Zaghra on the same day. The Turkish authorities sent out irregular troops, which were the only troops at their disposal, to meet the Russians. On the 17th the Russians took Kyzanlik, and the worst classes of Turks in Eski-Zaghra gave token of their intention to plunder the Christians of the town. The Turkish Governor seems to have done all he could to prevent this. But the Christians, believing that they would be attacked on the 23rd, sent a secret message to the Russians to urge them to advance. Accordingly, the Russians entered the city on the 22nd of July, and "were welcomed by the Bulgarians with unbounded demonstrations of joy." Some plundering of Turks by Bulgarian villagers followed the Russian occupation, although this was opposed by all the respectable Christian inhabitants, as the better class of Turks had before resisted their own countrymen in plundering the Christians. On the 23rd some Turkish villages in the surrounding plain were deserted by their inhabitants, and the Bulgarian neighbours then burned and plundered them. On the 25th there were some military executions of Turkish men, and of one Turkish woman by the Russians, the crime being the possession of arms and the firing at Russians in the streets. But as the Russians held nothing of the country except the spots where their troops were stationed, the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks had, by this time, begun the work of fire

and slaughter on the surrounding Bulgarian villages.* On the 26th of July, waggon-loads of wounded Bulgarian peasants, men, women, and children, were seen coming into Eski-Zaghra. It was on the day following this event that a massacre of Turks was begun by men who are styled in the letter of the American missionaries "the Bulgarian police." "On the 27th, a large number of Turks were executed by these men; and on the 28th, the worst class of Bulgarians began to take it on themselves to seize obnoxious Turks and despatch them with sword and musket at the border of the city." This was a massacre. But it was a massacre by no means either

* Since this passage was written I have seen the evidence given by Mr. W. K. Rose, correspondent of the *Scotsman* newspaper, who crossed the Balkans with General Gourko's force. This evidence proves beyond the possibility of doubt that the devastation of the country into which that General penetrated had begun, and had gone great lengths, before his expedition was undertaken. Mr. Rose states that he almost invariably accompanied the avant-guard, and that everywhere they met bands of refugee Bulgarians flying from the ravages of the Turks. He states that in the town of Jeni-Zaghra, a week before it was entered by Gourko, there had been a massacre of 600 men, women, and children, and that he saw horrid evidences of the work. Mr. Rose also saw the wasted bodies of Bulgarians, numbering over sixty men, women, and children, in one house, where they had taken refuge, and in which they had been burnt by the Turks. This was in the village of Dalboka. Farther, Mr. Rose saw the town of Eski-Zaghra fired by the Turks when it was evacuated by Gourko on his retreat. This important information from an eye-witness must be taken as modifying, to a considerable extent, some of the observations in the text.

on the scale or of the kind with which we have become familiar as perpetrated by the Turks. "From what we saw and heard," add the missionaries, "we judge that, perhaps, 100 Turks may have been cut down during those three days." The temporary Government of the city tried to stop these murders—and on Sunday punishment was denounced in all the churches against those who participated in them. It is, however, expressly added by the missionaries, "We do not believe that any Moslem woman or child was killed in the city by Bulgarians, though for several days Christian women and children were brought in wounded in a frightful manner. We heard of one Jewess being injured."

On the 31st of July, the city was retaken by the Turks under Suleiman Pasha. It was immediately given over to plunder, "and from the frequent reports of muskets heard in our neighbourhood, and from the dead bodies which we saw, we judge that large numbers of Bulgarians were massacred in the houses."

Such is the most authentic account—indeed, the only account which seems at all authentic—of the outrages committed by Bulgarians, which brought down upon a large district of country the indiscriminate vengeance of the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks who swarmed around the advancing forces of the Porte. Nothing seems to have been done by the Turkish generals or by the Turkish Government to

restrain these wretches, and in many instances they attacked and destroyed villages and massacred the inhabitants, who were wholly outside the line of the Russian march, and had taken no part directly or indirectly in those displays of Bulgarian feeling which invariably attended the arrival of Russian troops. During a great part of the month of August, one of the richest and most beautiful countries in Europe was the scene of cruelties and orgies as bad as, or worse than, those which signalised the operations of the Turkish Government in May, 1876. Early in September, the district was visited by Consul-General Fawcett, whose accounts are as dreadful as those of Mr. Baring from Batak. "If the aspect of Carlova," he says, "was appalling, that of Sopot was really awful. The same beautiful country, the same running streams, trim gardens, but not a house standing, half the place burnt, and every house and shop ransacked from top to bottom, and everywhere a horribly mingled smell of attar of roses and putrefying human flesh."* These had been towns respectively of about 20,000 and 10,000 inhabitants.

Writing some days later on the 19th of September, Mr. Fawcett declared that the "present war has probably caused more human misery than even the invasion of the Visigoths, who, fourteen centuries ago, desolated these same fertile countries. From Sopot

* Turkey, I., 1878, No. 368, Inclos. p. 330.

to Yeni-Zaghra, a distance of 150 miles, the country, as far as the towns go, is a desert, and, in my opinion, it is a country almost unequalled in Europe for fertility. It lies between the Great and Little Balkan, and it is, in fact, one great garden." In this letter, Mr. Fawcett supplies us with a very important correction of a statement which he had made in a former report, namely, that "the Bulgarians had fallen on their Turkish neighbours and massacred them." He now explains that, "from more minute inquiries he had made on the spot, he was inclined to think that an organised band of Bulgarians from the North of the Balkans, carrying a sort of badge or uniform, accompanied the Russian column, and that when the Russians retired, it was this corps (calling themselves 'Vengeurs') who commenced the hellish work." It will be observed that this agrees with the account of the American missionaries, who ascribe the slaughter of about 100 Turks at Eski-Zaghra to a body of men which they call "Police." It has been said that this corps was largely composed of men who had fled from Bulgaria after the insurrection of 1876, and who had lost their families in the massacres of May. If such a corps, composed of such materials, was really formed under the authority of the Russians, a heavy responsibility indeed rests on those who organised General Gourko's reckless expedition. Bad, however, as the conduct of this Bulgarian corps was, the account given of it by the American missionaries does

not accuse them, but, on the contrary, expressly exonerates them from the charge of indiscriminate slaughter, or of the massacre of women and children. This, not in one city or town, but in many, was the familiar work of the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks, who were armed and sent forth by the Turkish Government. Besides which, it is to be recollected, that the Russo-Bulgarian corps had a very short time, and a very small area of country in which to operate. Gourko's expedition was a flying one. There was no rest for the sole of his foot. We have seen that Eski-Zaghra was recaptured by Suleiman Pasha a few days only after its occupation by the Russians. The widespread and terrible devastation described by Mr. Fawcett was therefore unquestionably due to the Turks. It is remarkable, also, that it is generally the higher official representatives of the Porte who are everywhere represented as exhibiting especial brutality. Local Turks were often humane. There were two Turkish officers at Sopot, of whom in particular Mr. Fawcett reports that they were a "credit to their race"—doing everything they could to protect the wretched women and children who still cowered among the ruins. But of the Turkish Mudirs his report is strongly condemnatory. At Carlova, where 8000 women and children were dying of hunger and fear, Mr. Fawcett had to remonstrate most strongly with the Mudir "on the infamy of allowing these helpless creatures to be nightly visited and tortured,

or worse, by roving bands of Bashi-Bazouks."* In like manner the Mudir of Sopot told Mr. Fawcett that if the Bulgarian men who had fled should return, he would send every one of them to Philoppopolis, "which," says Mr. Fawcett, "as far as I can see, means to be hanged."†

And this brings us to transactions in which, at least, there can be no doubt of the direct responsibility of the Government of the Sultan. It might have been supposed that this Government would have been satisfied with the sweeping and indiscriminate vengeance which had been and was then still being inflicted on a whole country and a whole population by its armed bands. But this was not to be. A Military Commission was sent to Philippopolis, armed with summary powers of execution, and presided over by two men, Ibraham and Rifaat Pashas, of both of whom Mr. Layard had to report, on the 29th of September, that "he heard a very bad account."‡ We know what this means. It means that the most unscrupulous avarice and the most callous indifference to human life were enthroned on the Seat of Justice. It is not too much to say that the revelry in massacre of such savages as the Circassians, is less guilty than the deliberate murders of a Tribunal such as this. The seizure and judicial murder of Bulgarians was

* Ibid., No. 400, p. 348.
† Ibid., No. 368, Inclos. 2, p. 331.
‡ Ibid., No. 435, p. 391.

not determined by any evidence of participation in revolt, but simply by the fact whether the prisoner had property and wealth enough to pay the confiscators well. In the midst of his terrible accounts of the devastation of Bulgaria, Mr. Fawcett had to add that at Adrianople and Philippopolis, batches of thirty and forty had been hanged during the last few days.* "As to the men," he says, "I can only think that the authorities have come to the conclusion that they will exterminate the Bulgarian race in those parts. I am aware the Turks have had great provocation, but such deeds as have been, and are going on here, must, if known, bring down on the perpetrators the execration of the world; and looking at them from a political point of view, it is suicidal if the Turkish Government wish to have the sympathies of Europe."

It was not till the 20th of October, after about 300 Bulgarians had been hanged under this mockery of justice, that Mr. Layard succeeded in procuring the recall of Ibraham Pasha, the military governor of Philippopolis.†

But it was not the British Ambassador who really prevailed. It will be observed that this date—the 20th of October—is just five days after the great rout of the Turkish army, under Mouktar Pasha, at

---

* Ibid., No. 368, Inclos. 2, p. 331.
† Ibid., No. 502, p. 455.

the Aladji Dagh, near Kars. This is no mere coincidence. The supporters of Turkey in England have always been connecting the danger of massacre and of cruelty to Christians, with the disposition of the Turks to revenge defeat. But it has ever been in the hour of triumph that the Turks have shown the worst ferocity. In defeat they show a prudent regard to consequences. The truth is, that all the concessions of the Turkish Government in the direction of justice and humanity can, throughout the whole of these transactions, be traced to fear, and to external pressure. Up to the overthrow of their army in Asia Minor, the Turks had been so successful, both in Europe and in Asia, that they had the fullest confidence in their prospect of finally resisting and defeating Russia. It is always under such conditions that the real nature of their Government comes out without alloy. Mr. Layard had been interceding for the Bulgarians for weeks and weeks. But his intercessions had no effect till a terrible disaster to the Turkish arms shook the confidence of the Porte in its immunity from punishment. Mr. Layard's success, like all the other successes of British diplomacy in this deplorable history, seems to have been entirely due to the action and to the arms of Russia.

When, therefore, we recollect that a large party in England, embracing apparently all the supporters of the Government, were for some two months rejoicing in the prospects of Turkish success and of Russian

defeat, we can judge of the results which would have followed the attainment of their desires. The infamies of the Philippopolis Commission, which was in action during the sittings of the Conference of Constantinople, are eclipsed by the doings of the Military Commission which sat during the months when Turkey thought she was triumphant, and when, therefore, she was free to act according to her own bent. It must not be supposed that the sufferings inflicted by this great Turkish judge, Ibraham Pasha, were measured by the number of persons whom he condemned to death. Exile and confiscation, determined by the same corrupt motives, and supported by narratives of notorious falsehood, were added in still larger proportion to the capital executions. A fortnight after the great Russian victory in Asia Minor, we have a glimpse of the iniquities which had been going on, afforded to us by Vice-Consul Calvert, writing from Philoppopolis on the 1st of November, 1877. He says: "The telegram recalling him reached Ibraham Pasha, at Carlova, where he had been for some days previously, in command of the troops in that district, and where I now see by the English papers he has sent to the Porte accounts of engagements with insurgents which I can only describe as fictitious, all traces of insurrection on this side of the Balkans having disappeared more than two months ago." Even at that date, when Ibraham had been removed,

and capital executions were stopped,—when a new President of the Court-Martial had been appointed, "who was reported to be a just man, and inclined to be lenient,"—even then, Mr. Calvert gives us this further indication of the Turkish methods of proceeding:—

"The principal Bulgarian merchants of Hasskeui and Tchirpan, to the number of about forty, who are probably fully as innocent as these Bulgarians of Tatar-Bazardjik, have just been brought here under arrest. Like the Bazardjik merchants they have never borne arms or had any dealings with the Russians, though I could not, of course, undertake to say that none of them entertain pro-Russian feelings; they have regularly paid all the extraordinary contributions which they were called upon to furnish towards the war expenses, and though I am not acquainted with any of them personally, I think it may safely be said that they, being engaged in commerce, were not the kind of persons likely to countenance insurrectionary schemes. Yet they have been torn from their homes and families without a moment's warning, and I hear that it is contemplated to send them all into confinement in Asia Minor."*

Such was the Government which, when the rout in Asia had been followed on the 10th of December by the capture of Plevna, addressed Europe in these words:—"In the name then of humanity, we appeal to the Great Powers, and to their feelings of justice."†

* Ibid., No. 576, Inclos. p. 526.
† Turkey, II., 1878, No. 1, p. 3.

The audacity of this was great. But it was, if possible, still greater audacity that in the framing of this appeal, the determination of the Porte to persist in refusing the one great demand of Europe, was expressed as clearly as in all previous negotiations. What Turkey called upon the Powers to do was—not to consider some concession of guarantees such as had been asked—but once more to accept Midhat Pasha's Constitution as all that could be desired. It was again declared that special guarantees granted to special Provinces could not be admitted, for they would simply be "a premium offered to rebellion." It was gravely added that if any doubt remained in any minds, however sceptical, as to the validity of Turkish reforms, "this doubt ought to disappear in view of the formal and solemn declaration which we make of the sincerity of our resolutions."

The reply of the English Cabinet to this wonderful appeal was as benevolent to the Turks as usual. Mr. Layard conveyed to the Porte the assurance of the British Government that, "whenever negotiations for peace were set on foot, they would do what lay in their power to obtain favourable conditions for Turkey." The Turkish Government thanked the Foreign Secretary, on the 14th of December, for this message.

It was on this occasion that a remarkable episode occurred. The Turkish Ambassador in London intimated the impression of his Govern-

ment, that the Cabinet of the Queen knew what the probable demands of Russia would be in regard to Bulgaria, and were acquainted generally with the conditions on which Russia would agree to the re-establishment of peace. This was repudiated by the Foreign Secretary in the following words :—"I explained to Musurus Pasha, in reply, that his Government were mistaken in supposing that I knew what were the conditions of peace likely to be insisted on by Russia." Now, considering the communications which had taken place in July through Colonel Wellesley—the formal Memoranda which had been exchanged between the Emperor and the English Government—this was a statement which it is difficult to explain. The only possible solution of the difficulty would seem to be that the Cabinet could not feel sure that the terms which Russia had explained in July were terms which would still be open to Turkey in December. Even this explanation fails, however, when we recollect that although the Emperor had said distinctly that farther terms would be demanded in certain events, His Majesty had clearly indicated the passage of the Balkans as the military contingency which would operate to enlarge the terms he might demand. But the passage of the Balkans had not been effected on the 14th of December, when this conversation was held. And then what are we to say of the farther declaration made to the Turkish Ambassador on the same occasion : "I had no information on the

subject?"* Surely this was a great stretch of diplomatic licence.

Very different, as usual, in tone was the reply of Germany to the new appeal from Turkey—an appeal which only afforded fresh evidence of her obstinacy and impenitence. It was dignified and decisive:—"The German Emperor declines to accede to the Sultan's request for mediation."†

On the 21st of December, Musurus Pasha renewed a declaration of the unyielding attitude of the Porte. That Government would allow no interference of the Powers in its independent administration.‡ It knew that this would be no matter of offence to the Queen's Government, and so it again appealed to the good offices of England. The Foreign Secretary said, with very proper caution, that it would be convenient to know the general conditions of peace which the Porte would be prepared to accept. It was, indeed, high time to know how far Turkey had come to a consciousness of her position since the fall of Plevna. No reply, however, seems to have been given to this inquiry; but on the 25th of December, the Porte intimated that it would gladly know through England what terms would be offered by the Emperor of Russia. Turkey again declared that it trusted to the friendly mediation of the Queen's Government, which

---

* Ibid., No. 2, p. 3. † Ibid., No. 3, p. 3.
‡ Ibid., No. 4, p. 4.

the Porte was convinced "would not be refused by our ancient and constant friend."* Accordingly, on the 27th, Lord Augustus Loftus was desired to make the inquiry of the Russian Government. Prince Gortchakow replied on the 28th, in a courteous and friendly spirit, that the Porte must now address itself to the Imperial Commanders-in-Chief in Europe and in Asia, who would state the conditions on which an armistice would be granted.†

On the 4th January, 1878, the Queen's Government remonstrated with Russia against this reply, and argued that as an armistice must include operations both in Asia and in Europe, and must farther involve the operations of both Servia and Montenegro, it was clearly indispensable that the conditions of it should be discussed between the two belligerent Governments, and not merely between Generals commanding a portion of the contending forces.‡ This argument was, as usual, confidentially communicated to the Porte. By this time, however, the Government of the Sultan was beginning to have its eyes opened to its real position. Sofia had been taken. The Balkans had both been turned and traversed. The Russian army was pouring down their southern slopes upon the Roumelian plains. On the 5th of January, the

* Ibid., No. 9, Inclos. p. 6. † Ibid., No 15, p. 8.
‡ Ibid., No. 16, p. 9.

Ottoman Government telegraphed that it "accepted in principle the armistice proposed by Russia," and begged the Queen's Government to ask the Government of Russia to stop the progress of its armies.

On the 7th of January, the Foreign Secretary was obliged to explain to the Turkish Ambassador that England had not accepted the position of a mediator, and that she could take no step which it was evident would be useless. She had declared her neutrality, except under conditions affecting her own interests. These interests, moreover, had been specified and defined; and unless they were affected she could not interfere. It was necessary to repeat this, that no false hopes might be raised.* On the 8th of January, the Cabinet desired Lord Augustus Loftus to intimate to the Russian Government that England would advise the Porte to send delegates to the Russian Head-quarters to negotiate an armistice with the Russian Commanders. But Russia was now wisely determined to push her military advantage. She knew the skill of the Turks in the arts of delay. She knew that the British Government had already promised to help the Turks in reducing to a minimum the results of negotiation. The whole fruits of a campaign very dearly won might be lost by procrastination. On the 10th of January, therefore, the Grand Duke Nicholas replied to the Turkish Foreign Minister that

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 10–11.

"there cannot be any question of an armistice at this moment without bases of peace." The English Cabinet, when informed of this reply, telegraphed to Lord Augustus Loftus that they could not reconcile it with the declaration of Prince Gortchakow that the Russian Military Commanders were instructed to state the conditions upon which an armistice would be agreed to. The alleged inconsistency is not apparent. It was quite within the terms of this declaration to require the signature of a basis of peace as one condition of granting an armistice. Prince Gortchakow knew well that the British Government would befriend Turkey to the utmost, and would put every iron in the fire to procure for her the best possible terms. He was not bound under these circumstances to show his hand. He explained, accordingly, that the instructions as to the terms of peace which had been sent to the Imperial Commanders were too important to be confided to the telegraph. They might reach their respective destinations in about fifteen days from the 4th of January.

Under these circumstances the Foreign Secretary, on the 12th of January, advised the Porte to inquire of Russia what would be the nature of the conditions demanded as the basis of peace.* On the 13th of January, the Grand Duke Nicholas telegraphed to

* Ibid., No. 37, p. 15.

the Porte that he would communicate the basis of peace "to a person sent to him with full powers to accept them, and to conclude thereupon the principles of an armistice, which will afterwards be carried out." On the same day a prolonged Council of Ministers was held at the Porte, the result of which was a decision to send Servet Pasha, the Foreign Minister, with a colleague, to Kyzanlik on the next day, to meet the Grand Duke, "for the purpose of accepting bases of peace and concluding an armistice."

It will be observed, from this rapid narrative of events, that the disposition of the Porte to accept terms of peace underwent a rapid development during the four weeks which elapsed between the 14th of December, 1877, and the 14th of January, 1878. As usual, this favourable change was due entirely, not to English diplomacy, or to English effort of any kind, but exclusively to the arms of Russia. The moment Plevna had fallen, the Russian army resumed its march to the south. Its passage of the Balkans in the middle of winter was unquestionably one of the most brilliant operations of modern war. By rapid movements, effected simultaneously on several lines of attack, in midwinter and in severe weather, the great mountain barrier of Bulgaria was traversed with complete success; the very flower of the army which was yet left to Turkey was captured at the southern entrance of the Shipka Pass; and the broken

remnants of Suleiman Pasha's army were chased and driven to the Ægean coast. The Russian army advanced upon Adrianople and took it without a struggle.

These were the events which had at last convinced the Porte that it was no longer safe to defy Europe, to slaughter its subjects by Bashi-Bazouks, and to hang them by military Commissions. But the Turkish Government was not the only one which was deeply agitated by the success of the Russian arms. The Cabinet of the Queen began to be seriously uneasy from the moment that Plevna fell. Three days after that event, on the 13th of December, 1877, the Foreign Secretary communicated to the Russian Ambassador a new Memorandum explanatory of its views. A misgiving had arisen that the previous definition of "British interests," given on the 6th of May, was perhaps just a little defective. In this new Memorandum the despatch of that date was referred to as a definition only of those British interests which might be affected "most directly." The contingency of Constantinople "passing into other hands" was recalled. Prince Gortchakow's assurance that Russia did not aim at the "acquisition" of the Turkish Capital, and that the fate of that City must be matter of common interest and of general agreement—this also was recalled, with due appreciation of the "courtesy and friendly character" of such assurances. But it was now

urged that "the occupation of Constantinople by the Russian forces, even though only of a temporary character, and for military purposes only, would be an event which it would, on all accounts, be most desirable to avoid." Were such an occupation to appear imminent, it was represented that public feeling in England, "founded on a just appreciation of the consequences to be apprehended, might call for measures of precaution on the part of Great Britain from which Her Majesty's Government have hitherto felt justified in abstaining." The Foreign Secretary was therefore charged by the Cabinet to express its earnest hope that, should the Russians advance to the south of the Balkans, no attempt would be made to occupy Constantinople or the Dardanelles. "In the contrary event, the Queen's Government must hold themselves free to take whatever course might appear to them necessary for the protection of British interests." All this was conveyed under the grave intimation that it was "with the view of avoiding what might seriously endanger the good relations happily maintained between the two countries."*

It will be observed that this intimation was a complete departure from the tacit understanding which had been previously established. For five months—ever since the communications in July through

* Turkey, III., 1878, No. 1.

Colonel Wellesley—the British Government had remained silent under the emphatic and repeated declarations of the Emperor that he could not and would not absolutely bind himself to abstain from occupying the Turkish Capital. What he would promise, and what he did promise, was that he would not occupy Constantinople for the sake of mere military honour, but only if compelled to do so by the march of events. To this intimation no rejoinder had been made by the Cabinet of London. They did not any farther press for an assurance which the Emperor had thus pointed out he could not safely give. They had watched the struggle in silence when it appeared to be going against the Russians. But now, when the fortune of war had declared itself against the Turks, the British Government came forward to impose on Russia an absolute limit on her belligerent operations which might involve her in serious military and not less serious political complications, and which was in violation of the previous understanding.

It was not likely that Russia would submit to such a threat, conveyed under such conditions. Accordingly Prince Gortchakow replied in a Memorandum, dated December 16th, in which, indeed, the former assurances were repeated respecting the "acquisition" of Constantinople, but in which also any farther engagement was repelled with firmness.

It was all the more imperatively necessary that Russia should keep her military freedom as, at that very moment, even in professing to seek for peace, the Porte, as we have seen, was declaring anew its determination to resist the one essential demand of Europe. "His Majesty the Emperor," said the Russian reply, "considers that it is his right and his duty to oblige Turkey to conclude a solid and real peace which shall offer effectual guarantees against the return of the incessant crises which disturb the peace of Russia and that of Europe. These crises can only cease with the state of things which gives rise to them. The whole of Europe has recognised the impossibility of allowing them to continue. It is with the view of finally putting a stop to them that His Majesty the Emperor has taken up arms and exposed his people to heavy sacrifices. These sacrifices, borne with devotion, render it all the more the duty of His Majesty not to stop before having achieved a result which shall preserve Russia from the renewal of similar trials, which shall satisfy her Christian feelings, guarantee her repose, and at the same time consolidate the peace of Europe. This end must be attained. If the obstinacy or the illusions of the Porte shall oblige His Majesty to pursue his military operations in order to dictate a peace responding to the openly proclaimed object of the war, His Imperial Majesty has always reserved to himself, and still continues to claim in regard to this point, the

full right of action, which is the claim of every belligerent." Finally, the British Government was courteously asked "to have the goodness to define more clearly what are the British interests which they consider might be touched by the eventualities of the war within the limits to which the assurances of the Imperial Cabinet have restricted them, with a view to seeking in common the means of reconciling these interests with those of Russia, which it is the duty of His Majesty to protect."*

It is remarkable that no reply was returned to this inquiry of the Russian Government, and no rejoinder to their Memorandum for nearly a whole month. That paper was dated December 16, 1877; and the next communication from the British Cabinet was dated the 12th of January, 1878.† It is true, indeed, that the text of the Russian Memorandum does not seem to have been placed in the hands of the Foreign Secretary till the 2nd of January. But the substance of it must have been communicated by telegraph, and must have been known at once. The truth is, as subsequently appeared, that at this time the Queen's Government, from internal dissensions, did not know its own mind from day to day. About the 21st of December it was intimated that Parliament would be assembled. Even this, however, was not to be done at once, but only about three weeks

* Ibid., No. 2, p. 3-4.

† Ibid., No. 3, p. 4.

earlier than the usual time. This was a measure which could be assented to by opposite opinions, because it gave time to feel the pulse of the country. The beat of that pulse was not responsive to the party which desired, but did not yet dare, to interfere in support of the Turkish Government. During the next three weeks, Chambers of Commerce, Town Councils, and public meetings in more than one hundred and fifty different places, gave expression to the general feeling against such a policy.*

In the meantime the inquiry of the Russian Government remained unanswered. At last, however, on the 12th of January, the Cabinet of the Queen replied to Prince Gortchakow's request that it would define more clearly the British interests supposed to be endangered, by desiring Lord Augustus Loftus "to state to Prince Gortchakow that Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that any operations tending to place the passage of the Dardanelles under the control of Russia would be an impediment to the proper consideration of the terms of the final settlement between Russia and Turkey. You will ask His Highness whether he is willing to give an assurance to Her Majesty's Government that no Russian force shall be sent to the Peninsula of Gallipoli."

It will be observed that this reply did not press

* Sequence of Events in the Eastern Question, p. 28.

the former representations of the Cabinet against the possible military occupation of Constantinople. It made no rejoinder to the arguments by which the Emperor had defended his refusal to bind himself farther on that subject. Yet it was expressly framed in answer to the Memorandum in which those arguments were set forth. It specified a military operation wholly distinct from the occupation of the Capital as the one to which England must still object. It was a tacit acquiescence therefore in the refusal of Russia to give any binding engagement against the possible occupation of Constantinople.

On the day following this telegraphic reply of the English Government, Lord Augustus Loftus had an interview with Prince Gortchakow, in which he made the new, but more restricted, demand in respect to the occupation of Gallipoli.

The Prince replied formally, but verbally, on the 15th, in these words:—"The Russian Government have no intention of directing their military operations on Gallipoli, unless the Turkish regular troops should concentrate there. They farther hope that, in putting the question, Her Majesty's Government do not contemplate an occupation of Gallipoli, which would be a departure from neutrality, and would encourage the Porte to resistance."*

At the same time, when these communications were

* Turkey, III., 1878, No. 8, p. 6.

going on, the British Government became alarmed by sensational reports from their Ambassador at Constantinople as to the terms of peace which Russia was likely to demand ; and in view of these reports they desired Lord Augustus Loftus to intimate to Prince Gortchakow "that in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government any Treaty concluded between the Government of Russia and the Porte affecting the Treaties of 1856 and 1871 must be an European Treaty, and would not be valid without the assent of the Powers who were parties to those Treaties."* On the same day, January 14th, this opinion was conveyed to the Porte through Mr. Layard.†

It was not till the 21st of January that the Foreign Secretary replied to the request of Russia that England would give an assurance corresponding to her own against the occupation of Gallipoli. But on that day this assurance was given through Lord Augustus Loftus:—"You are authorised to inform Prince Gortchakow that Her Majesty's Government do not, under present circumstances, contemplate any occupation of the position in question."‡

On the same day, January 21st, the Russian Ambassador in London informed the Foreign Secretary that as false reports prevailed on the subject, he thought it right to inform the British Government

---

* Ibid., No. 6, p. 5. † Ibid., No. 7, p. 5.
‡ Ibid., No. 21, p. 11.

that in the bases of peace sent from St. Petersburgh to the Grand Duke Nicholas, "no mention was made of either the Bosphorus or Dardanelles."*

On the 23rd January, Mr. Layard forwarded a telegram from the Vice-Consul at Gallipoli, dated the 22nd, stating the Russians had advanced to Demotica, and that fears were entertained that by the occupation of Keshan, Gallipoli would be cut off from direct communication with the Capital. Although another telegram was received on the same day, showing that there was exaggeration in this report; and although, if it had been all perfectly true, it would have involved no breach on the part of Russia of the understanding come to in respect to the occupation of Gallipoli, the Cabinet seems to have taken the utmost alarm, and the dignity of the British Government was sustained by transactions of which the official record is as follows:—

"Admiralty, 23rd January, 1878, 7 P.M.,
to
ADMIRAL HORNBY, Vourlah.

"Most secret.

"Sail at once for the Dardanelles, and proceed with the fleet now with you to Constantinople. Abstain from taking any part in the contest between Russia and Turkey, but the waterway of the Straits is to be kept open, and in the event of tumult at Con-

* Ibid., No. 23, P. 11.

stantinople you are to protect life and property of British subjects.

"Use your judgment in detaching such vessels as you may think necessary to preserve the water-way of the Dardanelles, but do not go above Constantinople.

"Report your departure, and communicate with Besika Bay for possible further orders, but do not wait if none are there.

"Keep your destination absolutely secret.—Acknowledge."

"ADMIRAL HORNBY, Vourlah, 24th January, 1878, 6.10 P.M.,
to
Admiralty (received 5.12 A.M., 25th January, 1878.)

"Orders received. Sail at 5 P.M. to-day for the Dardanelles and Constantinople. Orders left for *Alexandra* and colliers to follow."

Then, twenty-four hours later we have the following :—

"Admiralty, 24th January, 1878, 7.25 P.M.,
to
ADMIRAL HORNBY { Vourlah. Koumkaleh. Chanak.

"Annul former orders, anchor at Besika Bay and await further orders. Report arrival there."

The result is recorded thus :—

"ADMIRAL HORNBY, Dardanelles, 25th January, 5.45 P.M.,
to
Admiralty (received 25th January, 11.5 P.M.).

"Received your telegraphic communication to anchor Besika Bay when abreast Dardanelles Forts.

Firman received there for passage of Straits. I returned to Besika Bay immediately, as ordered."

It is remarkable that the order which sent back the fleet to its former anchorage, when it was already "abreast of the Dardanelles Forts," was immediately followed by the receipt of information from Mr. Layard which, if it had been correct, would have been really alarming. For that diplomatist on the 24th of January announced that "he had just heard" the Russian conditions of peace, and the fifth of these was reported thus: "The question of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to be settled between the Congress and the Emperor of Russia." In this first form the news was reassuring, and made it more easy for the Cabinet to send back the fleet. But on the very next day, the 25th, it was discovered that in the telegram as first deciphered the word "Congress" had been substituted for "Sultan." Therefore, the British Ambassador's message remained to the effect that Russia demanded the great question of the settlement of the Straits to be regulated by a Treaty between herself and the Sultan alone. Nevertheless the return of the fleets to Besika Bay was suffered to remain. When, three days later, on the 28th of January, the Government had to explain to Parliament the dangers of the situation, they were obliged to confess that at that very moment they believed the Russian basis to include a separate

agreement between Russia and the Porte on the subject of the Straits. Yet even under this belief they did not repent of having sent back the fleet. There could be no clearer indication of distracted councils.

It was not until the 25th, that the Queen's Government had any fresh and authentic information as to what the Russian bases really were. On that day they were communicated to the Foreign Secretary by Count Schouvalow. They were as follows :—

"Bulgaria, within the limits of the Bulgarian nationality, not less than that of the Conference, to be an autonomous tributary Principality, with a national Christian Government, a native militia, and no Turkish troops, except at some points to be determined.

"Independence of Montenegro, with increase (of territory) equivalent to the military *status quo ;* the frontier to be decided hereafter.

"Independence of Roumania, with sufficient territorial indemnity.

"Independence of Servia, with rectification of frontiers.

"Autonomous administration, sufficiently guaranteed, to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Similar reforms for the other Christian provinces of Turkey in Europe.

"Indemnity to Russia for the expenses of the war ; in a pecuniary, territorial, or other form, to be decided hereafter.

"Ulterior understanding for safeguarding the rights and interests of Russia in the Straits.

"These bases being accepted, a Convention, an Armistice, and the despatch of Plenipotentiaries to develop them into Preliminaries of Peace."

On the same day Count Schouvalow, in the name of Prince Gortchakow, repeated the assurance that "we do not intend to settle by ourselves European questions having reference to the peace which is to be made."* On the 26th Mr. Layard telegraphed another version of the Russian terms of peace, with his own comment at the close: "It is scarcely necessary to say that this amounts to destruction of Turkish Empire in Europe."†

In the meantime, on the 17th of January, 1878, Parliament had met. The Ministers opened the Session by a Speech from the Throne, in which as usual the war was treated solely as a contest between Russia and Turkey. Not one word of anxiety or of interest was spoken in the cause of good government and of freedom in the East of Europe. Again, therefore, and this time from the most exalted place in the civilised world, Russia was exhibited as the only Power which even professed to care for that cause. It was a cause which assembled Europe had recently declared to be one affecting both its

* Ibid., No. 39, p. 15. † Ibid., No. 40, p. 15.

interests and its honour. But England had nothing to say about it. Exclusive stress was laid upon the risks which the war was supposed to involve as regarded British interests. "I cannot conceal from myself," the Sovereign was advised to say, "that should hostilities be unfortunately prolonged, some unexpected occurrence may render it incumbent on me to adopt measures of precaution. Such measures could not be effectually taken without adequate preparation, and I trust to the liberality of my Parliament to supply the means which may be required for that purpose."* In this Speech, however, it was expressly admitted that so far as the war had then proceeded neither of the belligerents had infringed the conditions on which the Queen's neutrality was founded.

Upon the determination of the Cabinet, on the 23rd of January, to order the fleets to proceed to Constantinople, both the Foreign Secretary and the Colonial Secretary had tendered their resignation. But the Colonial Secretary alone persisted in this resolution. The Foreign Secretary consented to remain when the fleets were countermanded on the following day. The countermanding of the fleet, however, was expressly rested by the Prime Minister, in his speech in the House of Lords on the 25th of January, not on any desire to conciliate and retain his

* Hansard, vol. 237, p. 5.

colleague, but on the very important conclusion which had been arrived at by the Government—that the Russian conditions of peace which had then been communicated by Count Schouvalow "furnished a basis for an armistice."* But, strange to say, notwithstanding this formal and public admission that the Russian demands constituted a reasonable basis of peace, the Cabinet on the same day communicated to Parliament its resolution to ask for a vote of six millions sterling for warlike preparations.

On the 28th of January, 1878, a vote of credit for six millions was moved in the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The speech of the Minister on this occasion marks an important change in the attitude and language of the English Government. Hitherto, as we have seen, since the beginning of the war, it had been declaring that nothing but danger to British interests as these had been defined in the despatch of the 6th of May, 1877, would induce England to interfere in the contest which had arisen. It could not be alleged that any one of these interests had been as yet endangered. The Queen's speech, eleven days before this date, had expressly said so. A suspicious ambiguity indeed rested on one of the Russian terms of peace, which might be interpreted to contemplate some separate dealing with the question of the Straits

* Ibid., p. 436.

between Russia and Turkey alone. But the Government did not even pretend to feel much alarm on this point. So little, indeed, did they seem to regard it that, as we have seen, they had not repented of their countermand of the fleet. The Cabinet, probably, were of opinion that there was no real danger of any modification being effected in the Treaty of 1856 on the question of the Straits, without the general consent of the Powers. The Russian Ambassador had informed them on the 21st of January that no such demand formed any part of the bases of peace sent from St. Petersburgh to the Grand Duke Nicholas.* The mere intimation on the part of England that she would not acknowledge any such modification would be enough to render any such arrangement nugatory. It was not, at all events, and for whatever reasons, considered worth while to resume that forward movement of the fleets which had already very nearly cost them the resignation of an important colleague.

All this, however, showed the vacillation of the Government, and added to that feeling of helpless irritation which is the best of all preparations in the public mind for foolish and hasty action. Moreover, it compelled the Ministry to hoist some other signal of alarm. Since it could not be alleged that Russia had attacked, or was likely to attack, any

* Turkey, III., 1878, No. 23, p. 11.

one of the British interests of which she had been warned—since it was not even thought worth while to move up the fleets to defend the waterway of the Straits—it was necessary for the Government to take up some new ground on which to rest a vote for warlike preparations. Accordingly it was now discovered, apparently for the first time, that the British interests which had been defined in May were by no means the only interests which might induce the Queen's Government to interfere. Suddenly the Cabinet had opened its eyes to the fact that the Russian terms of peace, although not touching any one of those interests, would be very damaging to the interests of Turkey. The whole sentiment and feeling of the Government had all along been in favour of the good old doctrine that the interests of Turkey were the interests of England. They had been obliged to suppress this sentiment, and even to declare the opposite, by the revolt of public feeling in the autumn of *1876*. But a reaction had now begun. The triumphant success of the Czar had evoked, as it was quite sure to do, that fear and dislike of Russia which is a predominant feeling among large sections of the British people. The Cabinet, or a portion of it, had been watching for this awakening as men watch for the morning. Advantage might be taken of it. That desire to uphold the Turks, which hitherto had been whispered only to the ear in closets, or worked

only through unacknowledged and unofficial agencies, might now be proclaimed on the house-tops. Accordingly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer dissected the Russian terms of peace, and pointed out all the dangers they involved. In particular he attacked the formation of a Bulgarian Province. He referred to the fact that it crossed the Balkans and would extend probably to the Ægean. Now there was one good objection to such a Bulgaria, namely, that it might deal unjustly with the interests of the Greek race—one important section of the Christian populations whose redemption was drawing nigh. But this was not the objection felt by the English Minister, and pointed out by him to the House of Commons. It was the effect of the new Bulgaria, not on any section of the subject populations, but on Turkey, that he dwelt exclusively. It amounted, he said, to a dismemberment of Turkey. So again of the war indemnity. In regard to this, also, he pointed out how it might be worked to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. Against all these results it might be necessary for England to contend in the coming Congress—and it was useless to contend in Congress, unless she was also prepared to contend in arms. The Government, therefore, desired to enter into Congress "armed with the strength of an united nation"—having for its great end and aim to support Turkey, and to save her from dismemberment.

If it had been the desire of the British Minister to second the most selfish designs imputed to Russia, he could not have made for that purpose a more effective speech. It seemed to identify her action and her policy with the interests and the feelings of the whole subject races in the East of Europe. It tended to identify the action of England with everything which they detested. Those races might be jealous of each other; but they were at least united in the desire to get rid of the Government of Turkey. The speech of the British Minister represented England as desirous, above all things, of preventing this great deliverance. Russia therefore was held up to them once more as the only Power which had the will and the strength to secure it. Such an exhibition of the relative position of the two countries was worth a great deal more to Russia than an additional army of 100,000 men.

Then let us look at this speech from another point of view, quite as important and quite as serious. Let us look at it in its relation not only to good policy, but to honour and good faith. Was it a new thing to the English Cabinet that Russia would demand the establishment of a Bulgarian Province stretching across the Balkans, and extending far down into the district of Salonica? No, the Queen's Government had known this since the 14th of June, 1877.*

* Turkey, XV., 1878, No. 6, p. 6.

England's own Plenipotentiaries at the Conference at Constantinople had demanded the establishment of a Bulgaria which included both sides of the Balkans. Russia had told them that this would be her demand before she crossed the Danube. The English Cabinet knew very well that this demand was not likely to be departed from after Turkey had been defeated in a bloody contest to prevent it. For seven long months not one word of remonstrance or even of objection had been intimated to Russia in reply. More than this—the confidential communication made by Count Schouvalow to the Foreign Secretary on the 8th of June, 1877, and the personal but formal communications from the Emperor of Russia, which passed through Colonel Wellesley in the end of July, 1877, had not only made this intimation, but had even explained in some detail the very terms which were now being demanded from Turkey in January, 1878. These had been for many months in the possession of the Government. Yet at this critical moment they were concealed from Parliament. The daily telegrams from Mr. Layard repeating the excited reports of a panic-stricken city were served up, hot and hot, to the two Houses of Parliament to fan the excitement and intensify the passions of the hour. But the evidence which would have shown the long silence of the Government when it was in full possession of Russia's intentions—all this was carefully kept back, till at last, when it was produced, it failed, in

the prevailing excitement, to attract attention.* If it had been produced at the opening of the Session it would have served to allay irritation and to prevent alarm. It would have shown that Russia was adhering strictly to intentions long announced and long tacitly acquiesced in. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer expatiated on the dangers involved in the indemnity, and pointed to the possibility of part of it, or the whole of it, being taken in the shape of territorial cession, no member of the House of Commons could have supposed that the Minister had for months been in possession of a document explaining that Russia would probably limit her demand for territorial cession to the restoration of her old Bessarabian frontier, and to the cession "of a certain portion of Asia Minor," including the district of Batoum. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his speech of the 28th of January, went the length of saying, "On this subject (territorial cession) I have no information to guide me." The Ministry had a right to disbelieve the Emperor if they saw cause to do so. Or they might expect him to be more exacting now that he had achieved such victories. But they had no right to conceal from

* The Paper containing the Memorandum of Colonel Wellesley is No. 9 of the Session: whilst that containing the communications of June, 1878, through Count Schouvalow, is No. 15. Thus Papers much less important were allowed a long precedence.

Parliament at such a moment the assurances which had actually been given, and which, as it turned out, were fairly adhered to by the Russian Government. The "portion of Asia Minor" had never been defined, except by the explanation that it would include Batoum. But this was the very cession of which there was the greatest jealousy in England. Parliament did not then know, and Parliament was not told, that the intentions of Russia in respect to this port on the Euxine had been frankly intimated long ago, and that this intimation had been received by the Queen's Government with silent acquiescence.

Lastly, let us look for a moment at the time when this vote for six millions was asked as a warlike demonstration. If it had been intended to resist the establishment of autonomous provinces in Turkey as equivalent to her dismemberment, the necessity of taking military precautions against such a result might have been taken with advantage just a little earlier. Before the Russians crossed the Danube—or after they had crossed it, when they were held at bay for months before the earthworks of Plevna—when Mouktar Pasha seemed to be triumphant in Asia—such a policy might have had some chance of at least a temporary success. It is possible even that at a much later period it might have been attended with some result. If, when Plevna fell, active measures had been taken to save the Turks, their fate might have been at least post-

poned. There is no saying what they might not have done under the guidance of English officers in opposing the passage of the Balkans. But it was twelve days after the fall of Plevna before it was determined even to call Parliament together. Then when Parliament was summoned it was not called at once, but for a date three weeks later. Then, when it actually met, the Government had nothing to propose. Ten days before that time they heard that Sofia had fallen, and that Adrianople was to be abandoned. The truth is that the rapidity of the Russian advance, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer candidly confessed, "had been enough to take their breath away." It took away more than their breath; it took away their common sense. The result was that this new policy of preventing the dismemberment of Turkey was announced at a moment when Turkey was prostrate at the feet of her foe, and when an army of 200,000 men were at the gates—the undefended gates—of Constantinople. The inadequacy, too, of the proposed preparations, even when they were made, ought not to escape remark. If Turkey was to be saved from being cut up into autonomous or tributary provinces, and if Russia was to be prevented from taking back her Bessarabian frontier, or acquiring a new frontier in Asia Minor, which was to include Kars and Batoum, a vote of six millions represented a puny effort indeed for the attainment of such results.

Let us now return to the progress of events. The Turkish Plenipotentiaries, for the conclusion of an armistice, and for the acceptance of the bases of peace, left Constantinople on the 14th January. But they did not reach the Russian headquarters till the 21st. More than another week elapsed, and on the 29th of January Mr. Layard telegraphed to his Government, that although the Porte had, on the 23rd, sent full powers and instant orders to accept the bases of peace as submitted to them by the Grand Duke, nothing had as yet been heard from them.* The drift of this telegram, of course, was to throw the blame of intentional delay upon the Russians. It appears, however, from a previous telegram of the 27th, that at first, at all events, the Turkish Plenipotentiaries had played the usual game of the diplomatists of the Porte—the game of delay. Like the Government of England, they objected to the first article of the Russian bases relating to Bulgaria, and to the second part of the fourth article respecting reforms in the Turkish provinces.† It was only under the last and latest instructions of the Porte, issued on the 23rd, that the Plenipotentiaries were authorised to accept the whole. Still nothing had been heard of the result. In the meantime the Russians were advancing on Constantinople, as Mr. Layard reported on the 28th: "in two, or, perhaps, three columns in

---

* Turkey, IV., 1878. † Turkey, V., No. 4, p. 1.

great force."* The English Cabinet became more and more uneasy in sympathy with the Porte. On the 29th the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg was desired to inquire the cause of the delay. But Prince Gortchakow could not explain. This was on the 30th of January.† Under these circumstances the anxieties of Her Majesty's Government relieved themselves by a renewed intimation to Russia that England could not recognise any treaty concluded between Russia and Turkey alone, in so far as it might modify European treaties, or affect general interests.‡ To this declaration Prince Gortchakow at once replied that to effect an armistice certain bases of peace were necessary, but they were only to be considered as preliminaries and not definitive as regarded Europe. "His Highness stated categorically, that questions bearing on European interests will be concerted with European Powers, and he had given Her Majesty's Government clear and positive assurances to this effect."§

On the day following, the 31st of January, the Russian Government further intimated that it had abandoned that Article in the Bases of Peace which referred to "an understanding between Russia and Turkey in regard to the Straits," and had no objection to suppress it altogether.‖

---

* Ibid., No. 7, p. 2. † Ibid., No. 12. ‡ Ibid., No. 11.
§ Ibid., No. 14, p. 4. ‖ Ibid., No. 15.

It was constantly represented at this time that the continued advance of the Russians during these negotiations was hardly consistent with good faith. But the papers presented to Parliament do not bear out this imputation. On the 15th of January the Emperor of Russia had told the Sultan that "he could not consent to a suspension of military operations during the negotiations," and this had been communicated on the same day to the Cabinet of London.* And when the Turks did at last accept the whole terms offered to them, those terms provided for the complete occupation by the Russian army of the defences of the Capital. It was not till the 31st of January that the Protocols were actually signed at Adrianople, and orders were issued for the suspension of hostilities to all the armies, both in Europe and in Asia. It is, however, quite true that the Russian armies continued to advance after that date. But they did so, not in contravention of the armistice, but in fulfilment of its terms. On the 5th of February Mr. Layard telegraphed that the Russian forces were to occupy Tchataldja on that day, and on the 6th the final result of the campaign was announced by the Ambassador in the following terms:—"The Russians have occupied Tchataldja in considerable force. The Russian General insisted on the abandonment by the Turks of the Tchekenedje lines, as one of the condi-

* Turkey, III., No. 9, p. 8.

tions of the armistice, and the Turks have been compelled altogether to retire from them, leaving Constantinople quite undefended."*

It will be observed that the whole of these proceedings were in strict accordance with the openly declared intentions and with the assurances of the Emperor of Russia as announced to the Queen's Government when they had urged him not to occupy Constantinople. He distinctly declined to give any promise on the subject, except one—that he would not occupy the Turkish Capital for the mere sake of military honour, but only in the case of being compelled to do so by the march of events. It would, however, have been the height of imprudence if he had halted before securing the defences of the Capital. Three considerations were conclusive against such a course. In the first place, the experience of Plevna had shown what a power of resistance lay in fortified positions armed with modern weapons of precision. In the second place, a like experience had shown the infinite resources of Turkey in the arts of diplomatic fence. In the third place, indications were not wanting that the Cabinet of London were as ready as ever, at any moment, to adopt the interests of Turkey as identified with the interests of England. Under those circumstances it was the policy and the duty of the Russian Government to take effective advantage

* Turkey VII., 1878, No. 11, p. 3.

of the brilliant military successes which had rewarded its arms after the fall of Plevna. Whether the motives and aims of Russia were as purely selfish as her enemies asserted them to be, or whether they were mixed in as fine and just proportions as her own diplomatists had described them, the course then imposed upon her was the same. Nothing short of a position placing Constantinople at the mercy of her army could secure Russia from the danger of great military embarrassment, and of a great political defeat.

Accordingly, the armistice not only secured to Russia the power of occupying Constantinople at any moment, but it placed in the hands of her forces almost all Bulgaria, Roumelia, and Thrace, up to the lines of Constantinople and Gallipoli. They occupied also Bourgas and Media on the Black Sea.

All this having been successfully accomplished by Russia, the English Government resumed its fitful and feeble action in a manner involving the utmost danger to the interests of the Turks, and serving no other purpose, as regarded the interests of England, than that of showing useless and undignified irritation. Not the Fleet, but, as it was specially explained, a portion only of the Fleet, was again ordered to proceed to Constantinople. This was on the 8th of February. The pretext was that the object of the measure was to secure British life and property in case of tumults in the Capital. When in the Session of 1877

the Cabinet was blamed for not having occupied the waters of Constantinople in combination with the other European Powers, when Russia and Austria had invited them to do so for the purpose of compelling the Turks to adopt the reforms which the Powers had recommended, Lord Salisbury had replied that Fleets were in that position really powerless. They could do nothing but bombard Stamboul. This was by no means true of the time when that measure was proposed by the Powers. But it was perfectly true of the time when the measure of sending the English Fleet was now actually adopted by the Cabinet. At the beginning of the war the occupation of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles would have laid an effectual arrest on some of the most necessary measures of the Turkish Government for the recruitment and reinforcement of their army. It would have stopped the passage of troops from the Asiatic Provinces. But now, when Constantinople might be occupied at any time by the Russian Army, the British Fleet would have been absolutely helpless to prevent it. Accordingly the Russian Government at once replied that this step obliged them, on their side, to consider the means of protecting—not British or Russian subjects only, but all Christians, and in order to obtain this result to contemplate the entry of a portion of their troops into Constantinople. The Foreign Secretary, of course,

protested that the two measures were entirely different in their nature. But, whether different or not, it cannot be denied that it was precisely such a step as Russia would have desired if she had wished an excuse to occupy Constantinople. The Turks were therefore in great alarm. They protested against it; and declared that its ostensible excuse had no foundation in fact, as the Government of the Porte was perfectly competent to maintain order in the Capital. It served, however, for the moment, to satisfy in some little degree the irritation of the many sections of English political society who longed to see their country involved in a war with Russia in defence of Turkey. Most fortunately Russia, on reflection, saw that no good purpose would be gained by taking any serious notice of the presence of the English Fleet. She did, however, actually advance her troops beyond the lines fixed by the armistice, and continued to hold this advanced position in spite of the remonstrances of the British Government. In a few days the war party in England were disgusted by finding that, as usual, the Cabinet had compromised its attitude of menace by entering into a new understanding with the Government of Russia. Prince Gortchakow agreed to assure the Cabinet of London that the Russian forces had no intention of occupying the Peninsula of Gallipoli, or the lines of Bulair. In return for this assurance the Foreign Secretary promised that England would not land troops at any

point on the European side of the Straits, and with effusive generosity added, that he would give the same assurance as to the Asiatic side if Russia would give a corresponding assurance on her part.* This was at once agreed to by Prince Gortchakow, and so the matter ended.

And now we come to a new episode in this strange and eventful history, which must be told in another chapter.

---

* Turkey, XVII., No. 2, p. 1.

CHAPTER XII.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CONGRESS.

WHEN men have been weak and vacillating on great questions they are apt to take revenge upon themselves and others by being obstinate on small points. Perhaps there has never been a more signal illustration of this tendency than in the transactions which followed in respect to the proposed Congress for the final establishment of peace.

The greater part of the month of February was occupied by those negotiations between Russia and Turkey, which converted the bases signed at Adrianople into the Preliminary Treaty of Peace, which was signed at San Stefano on the 3rd of March. In the meantime, however, on the 4th of February, the Austria-Hungarian Government had invited the Government of the Queen to an "International Conference" to be held at Vienna. This invitation was immediately accepted.* On the 7th the Austria-Hungarian Government amended its proposal by substituting a Congress for a Conference, and Berlin for Vienna

* Turkey, XXIV., No. 1.

as the place of meeting. It was explained that at the Congress the Powers should be represented by their Prime Ministers. On the following day this amended proposal was also accepted by the Queen's Government, and on this occasion the Foreign Secretary explained it to be the opinion of Her Majesty's Government "that it would be desirable to have it understood, in the first place, that all questions dealt with in the Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey should be considered as subjects to be discussed in the Congress, and that no alteration in the condition of things previously established by Treaty should be acknowledged as valid until it has received the assent of the Powers."*

As this sentence is the first beginning of a dispute in which the British Government chose to maintain an inflexible obstinacy, and which went very near to prevent any Congress being held at all, it is worth while to look at it somewhat carefully. And in order to do so it is necessary, in the first place, to recollect what is the real nature of a Congress such as that which was now proposed. It is not a Court of Justice, nor is it even a Court of Arbitration. It is not a Court with any coercive jurisdiction, or a Court in which any matter can be conclusively settled by vote, or by majority. It is essentially a Court of Conciliation—an assembly

* Ibid., No. 5, p. 3.

in which an endeavour is made to settle high matters in dispute by discussion and mutual concession. On the other hand, it is not less necessary to recollect what was the real nature of the Treaty which was then being drawn up between the two late belligerents. It was the result of a war between two independent Powers, each perfectly entitled to wage that war, and to obtain from it such results as its success might warrant. Those results must necessarily alter the previous *status quo*. Other Powers had of course a right to object to any one of these results if they thought it their interest to do so. But it was an extravagant assertion of that right to maintain that there was no alteration whatever of the previous *status quo* which the belligerents were competent to settle between themselves. At all events, it was an extravagant expectation that the successful belligerent would admit this doctrine expressly, and without any limitation. It was still more extravagant to suppose that the successful belligerent would admit not only the right of the other Powers to object to everything it had obtained by war, but to declare also its own willingness to give way to such objection if that should be the result of discussion. There were obviously some stipulations enforced by the victorious Power upon the defeated Power, which the victor had an absolute right to stand to against all objectors, and at any cost. For example, Russia had not secured her victory

without allies. Those allies were to have some reward in the victory they had helped to secure. It touched Russia's honour that the stipulations which affected them should not be negatived in any Congress. Yet these stipulations did in a very important matter affect the previous *status quo* as it had been established by European Treaties. There was nothing unusual or unnatural in this. Treaties always are affected by the result of war. The Powers which looked on whilst the contest was being fought out between Russia and Turkey knew perfectly well that in its result it must affect largely the previous condition of things. To assert their right, therefore, after it was over, to set aside the whole of these results if it pleased them to do so, was to assert an abstract proposition which was of no theoretical value, and which in a practical point of view was unreasonable and even absurd. But to demand from Russia an assent to the meeting of the Congress under a form which not only would have implied her assent to that abstract proposition, but would have implied her willingness to this claim being carried into operation, was a demand which Russia could not rationally be expected to concede. Yet this was the demand which the English Cabinet was pleased to make, and to persist in with verbose tenacity for weeks together. Not one of the other Powers supported the Government of the Queen in this demand. Russia reso-

lutely refused to accept the Congress under any form of words which would have carried her assent to the proposition that any other Power, or all Europe combined, could replace matters in the East of Europe exactly as they had been before she had sacrificed so much blood and so much treasure to amend them. She did not deny or dispute the right of the other Powers to "discuss" what they pleased. The Treaty, and the whole Treaty, would be laid before the Congress. But allowing other Powers to discuss the whole and every part of the Treaty was a very different thing from admitting beforehand that she considered everything without exception as open to discussion. Such an admission might be held to imply that Russia bound herself to accept the results of that discussion even on points most really affecting her interests and her honour.

The Austria-Hungarian Government took the reasonable view of this dispute, when it said, in commenting on the English demand, "The Austrian Government maintains that all the stipulations which affect European interests ought to be discussed at the Congress, and that Europe will decide upon them; but as Prince Gortchakow has declared to Austria that it was the Congress which would decide what are the Preliminaries of Peace which affect the interests of Europe, and that all the points which were found to be of European interest would be submitted to its deliberation, and could not be considered

as valid until they obtain the assent of all the Powers, it appears to Austria that the object of the English Declaration—that is to say, the reservation of full liberty of action, a point of view which Austria entirely shares—is thereby attained; and Count Andrassy thinks that under these circumstances it is neither for the interest of England nor of Austria to raise difficulties in regard to this question."*

The truth evidently is, that the obstinacy of the English Cabinet on this question of form arose out of its position at home. Its supporters in Parliament and in the Press had become thoroughly disgusted and alarmed by the results of its vacillation. It was absolutely necessary to stick to something. An ambiguous formula which had a plausible sound was better than any other for the purpose. It involved no danger of immediate action, either in one direction or another. It was something on which a divided Cabinet could agree, and it could be easily manipulated so as to convey the impression of great resolution. An excellent example of this use of ambiguous words is to be found in the form in which the demand of the Cabinet of London was expressed in a despatch to Sir H. Elliot, on the 13th of March :—"Her Majesty's Government desire to state that they must distinctly understand before they enter into Congress that every article in the

* Ibid., No. 9, p. 5.

Treaty between Russia and Turkey will be placed before the Congress—not necessarily for acceptance, but in order that it may be considered what articles require acceptance or concurrence by the several Powers, and what do not."* In this formula the words "not necessarily for acceptance" have a very resolute air. They seem to say to Russia, "Don't suppose that acceptance of any one of your articles will be a matter of course. Don't suppose that there is even any part of your Treaty which you can bring for mere registration. The whole and every part must be open to our decision." Accordingly, this was the defiant sense and tone in which these words were accepted and explained with shouts of triumph by supporters of the Government. The real truth was that no such bravery was intended. What it really meant was, "We don't pretend that every part of your Treaty needs our acceptance at all. But other parts do: and in order to discriminate, we must see and discuss the whole." This was a most reasonable proposition, and if this had been said in plain words, there would have been no dispute at all. Russia never pretended to keep back any part of the Treaty from sight, or from such discussion as others might choose to raise. But "accepting discussion" was an ambiguous phrase which might mean accepting the results of discussion. In this sense she could

* Ibid., No. 8, p. 4.

27170

not admit it. She would only pledge herself to "accept discussion on those portions of the Treaty which affected European interests." "The liberty which she did not dispute to others, Russia claimed for herself. It would be to restrict this liberty, if alone, among all the Powers, Russia contracted a preliminary engagement."*

This frivolous dispute lasted the whole of March. At last, on the 26th, the Russian Ambassador defined the position of his Government to be as follows:—"It leaves to the other Powers the liberty of raising such questions at the Congress as they may think it fit to discuss, and reserves to itself the liberty of accepting or not accepting the discussion of these questions."†

This final reply of Russia was received on the 27th of March; and on the same day the Foreign Secretary resigned his office. He did so on account of decisions come to by the Cabinet, some of which were soon revealed, but in regard to others of which there is a direct conflict of testimony between Lord Derby and his former colleagues. What is certain is that these decisions looked in the direction of warlike preparations against Russia: the calling out of the Reserves at home—the novel employment of Indian troops in European operations—and the occupation of Cyprus, if not also of some part of the Syrian coast.

---

* Ibid., No. 15, p. 7. † Ibid., No. 19, p. 9.

It is not my intention here to enter upon the constitutional argument which was raised by the announcement of the intention of the Government to bring some 7000 men of the Indian army, without the previous consent of Parliament, to take part in military operations in Europe. That it was a novelty is admitted. That there is a strong presumption under our Constitutional system against all measures of novelty, except in cases of extreme necessity, cannot be denied. On the other hand, in any contest involving the highest issues of national safety, the Crown could not wisely be refused the right of using its Indian army. Early in the present century it was used in a contest which was virtually European, when Abercromby's Expedition was sent to Egypt. Moreover it is to be recollected that as both Russia and England are Asiatic as well as European Powers, there can be no absolute separation between Asiatic and European operations in the event of a war between them. Each Power would naturally use both European and Asiatic troops wherever it may be convenient to do so. In the present case the measure must be viewed with reference to the fact that it was a time of actual peace, and with no immediate prospect of war, that Parliament was sitting, and that no sufficient reason was ever alleged for the secrecy which was maintained.

The conduct of the Government, however, in

this matter must be mainly judged by the purpose which was really in view. If it was seriously contemplated to count on 7000 Indian troops as a competent reinforcement of the British Army with a view to military operations against the Russian forces in complete possession of the Balkan Peninsula, it may safely be left to the judgment of later times. In all probability it had no more definite purpose than to satisfy that clamour and craving for warlike resolutions which had alternately been fomented and mortified by the fitful and abortive policy of the Government, and which found a temporary satisfaction in the occupation of Cyprus. It cannot be doubted that the disclosures of Lord Derby, though discredited by his remaining colleagues, reveal a good deal of the atmosphere in which this movement was conceived. The best thing that can be said of it is that it pleased the Indian Army, and may have stimulated its military spirit. Against this benefit, however, if it really accrued, there are heavy counter weights of which this is not the place to estimate the value. It is enough to say here that the judgment to be passed upon all the military preparations of the Government must depend on the wisdom of the policy which they were intended to support. What that policy had been up to this date has been traced in the previous chapters. What it still continued to be and what were the results to which it led, remain for us yet to follow.

We have seen that the very first of the Russian conditions of peace was the establishment of a new Province of Bulgaria. We have seen, also, that this was the very first condition which the English Minister specified to the House of Commons on the 28th of January as a source of danger and a subject of alarm. He did not say that it would be a danger to British interests, as these had been defined on the 6th of May, 1877. Still less did he say that it would be a danger to the population. What he did say was that it would be a danger to the Porte. It was an approach to the dismemberment of Turkey. For many months—since the outbreak of the war—the original "diapason" of the "integrity and independence" of Turkey had been professedly abandoned. Instead of that venerable formula, there had been substituted the new diapason of "British interests." But the first fundamental note had, in reality, never been silenced in the ears or in the hearts of the Queen's Government. Once more the old drone was sounded. The new Bulgaria, it was only too apparent, could not be easily reconciled either with the integrity or independence of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. It was further explained to the House of Commons that the danger arose especially from the great size and geographical position of the new Province. It was not at that time absolutely known what its boundaries were to be. But Russia had long ago given the alarming

intimation that these boundaries would not be less than those which had been assigned to the new Province at the Conference of Constantinople. Mr. Layard had already telegraphed, referring his Government to the Protocols of that Conference, as indicating the probable extent of the Russian demand. It did not need all the sagacity of the British Ambassador to be sure that the extent which all Europe had agreed upon as necessary for the new Bulgaria before the war, was not likely to be less than the extent with which Russia would be content now that she had triumphed in a bloody contest. The new Bulgaria would be found to extend into the district of Salonica. It would not embrace that town; but it could scarcely be doubted that at some other point it would reach the Ægean.

This reference by Mr. Layard to the Conference of Constantinople, and the repetition of it to Parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, recalls us to that happy time when England had made a show of union with the other Powers of Europe; when she had held a Preliminary Conference with them, from which the Turks were excluded; when the Russian Embassy had been the place selected for this dictatorial assembly; and when the British Plenipotentiary and the Russian Ambassador were, like twin stars in the firmament of diplomacy, never seen except in continual apposition.

Let us then accept the reference of Mr. Layard

and of Sir Stafford Northcote, and let us trace the history of this new Province of Bulgaria.

When the Cabinet of London had first suggested the idea of a Conference of the Powers, it had also suggested the basis of a settlement. The first and most important item in the basis was that Bulgaria should be granted "Administrative Autonomy" under the guarantee of the Powers. No geographical description was given of this new Province, and no political definition was given of this new Constitution. These were the details to be filled in by the work of the proposed Conference. General explanations, however, were given, which made it plain that the new Province could not exclude those districts south of the Balkan, in which the massacres had occurred; and that "autonomous administration" must greatly limit if not exclude that direct government by the Sultan which had been so long and so grievously abused.

Accordingly, when the Preliminary Conference had done its work at the Russian Embassy, and when, on the 20th December, 1876,* its proposals were confidentially communicated to the Grand Vizier, the Turks found that the scheme of the Powers was one which would establish a new Province in the heart of their Empire in Europe—a Province not only stretching across the Balkans, but extending

* See ante, Chap. VII., vol. i., p. 319.

from the Danube to a point far south in the district of Salonica. It did not actually touch the Ægean, but it left between its southern boundary and the Mediterranean coast only a narrow strip of territory in which Turkey might still misgovern or ravage as before. It is true that this Province was to be subdivided into two "Vilayets" or Administrative Districts, each with a Governor of its own. But these Vilayets, thus nominally separated, were to be united by common privileges of the most important kind, and were to be separated from the rest of the Turkish Empire in Europe by large and semi-independent powers of administration. The Governors must be Christians. They might be subjects of the Porte; but they might also be foreigners. The Sultan was not to be free in his right of appointing those high officers. His selection was to be subject to the approval of the Powers. And when once appointed, they were irremovable by the Turkish Sovereign. They were to hold their office for a fixed term of years. They were to have the exclusive right of appointing all the subaltern officers of the new native militia, and the Porte had no right of appointing even the superior officers except in the case of more than a thousand men being concentrated in a single place. Moreover, this militia was to be organised under the superintendence of a Foreign International Commission, on the principle that officers, non-commissioned

officers and soldiers to the extent of from 2000 to 4000 men should be taken from European armies, who were to act as cadres.* The Sultan was not allowed to station his army in any part of the Province except in the fortresses and the chief towns. It was to be employed only in the defence of the frontier, and all operations in the interior of the Provinces were interdicted unless in the case of war, or in the case of the Governors calling for the troops. Quite as important as these stipulations, and quite as significant of the future, were the financial demands of the Conference on behalf of the new Bulgarian provinces. The Sultan was no longer free in the collection of the revenues, or in the imposition of taxes. A sum which was to be fixed by a Commission of Supervision, but which was not to exceed thirty per cent. of the revenue of the Province, was to be payable to the Imperial Treasury, for the wants of the central Government. The whole remainder of the revenue was to be appropriated to the internal needs of the Province. All these were indispensable conditions in the opinion of the Conference. Without them the abuses of Turkish administration could not be terminated, and the liberties of the Bulgarian populations could not be established. Moreover, these exceptional privileges and exceptional

* Turkey, XXIV., p. 167.

powers were to be secured by a European guarantee, whilst the inauguration and establishment of this separate Constitution was to be under the protection, for a time, of foreign troops, and under the guidance of an International Commission.*

Such was the general nature of the proposals which the Turks found cut and dry for their acceptance when the doors of the Russian Embassy were opened to admit them at the close of the Preliminary Conferences. Against these proposals the Ministers of the Porte resolutely set their face, and from the Turkish point of view they were quite right. They were absolutely incompatible with any reality, or even with any show of independence as belonging to the Sultan. They would have established an *imperium in imperio* in the heart of his dominions. They were not only a step, but a very long step towards the independence, not of Turkey, but of the new province. The Porte had ample experience of the inevitable results of such special privileges. It was by similar steps that Wallachia and Moldavia and Servia had at various dates worked their way, first to the position of vassal Principalities, then to the expulsion of the Turkish garrisons, and to a position of virtual independence, and had now too clearly assumed the position of hostile States. The Turks were too sharp to be deceived; and the expecta-

* Turkey, II., 1877, p. 163-4-5.

tion that they would admit such terms, except under the determined pressure of united Europe, was an expectation childish in the extreme. In the sittings of the Conference which succeeded, the Turkish Plenipotentiaries had fought every inch of ground—and they fought it with arguments which, from their point of view, were of undeniable force. They astutely observed that the limitation of the Sultan to the enjoyment of a fixed sum out of the Provincial Revenue, was virtually the restriction of the right of that Sovereign to the receipt of a Tribute. They argued that if the proposal of the Conference was not this avowedly, it was this in reality; and would inevitably come to it in form as well as in substance. They objected to the geographical expansion given to the Province of Bulgaria. They pointed out that the Province known to them by this name lay wholly to the north of the Balkans. They objected to the constitution of a Province entirely new, which, though divided into two Vilayets, was specially intended to include, as far as possible, all the Bulgarians in European Turkey. The very aim of such a scheme was incompatible with maintaining the integrity of Turkey, whose Empire was, and always had been, an Empire over many nationalities. Least of all could the Sultan consent to give especial reward to that one nationality which (as the Turks alleged) had been specially favoured, and had only been incited to rebellion by

foreign intrigue. The proposal to single out this one nationality because of the very fact of its consanguinity or sympathy with the hereditary enemy of Turkey, and to cut across all the established divisions of Turkish administration in order to create a new Province for this favoured population, was a proposal not only involving everything which could be most offensive to Turkey, but involving everything which could be most dangerous to her Empire.

It was in the face of all these considerations, and in defiance of all these arguments, that England and the other Powers persisted in their demand for this new Bulgaria. At the meeting of the Conference which was held on the 8th of January, 1877, the Italian Plenipotentiary was empowered by his colleagues to explain and to enforce the reasons of their demand. In that explanation the Cabinet of London was put forward as the main agent in the Bulgarian proposal. "The principal motives for the initiative of her Britannic Majesty's Government are found in the deeds that had taken place in the localities situated outside the vilayet of the Danube: that from that time no abstraction could be made from the southern slope of the Balkans: that the measures on which they agreed are thus brought to extend over all, or parts of, the vilayets of the Danube, of Sofia, of Prizrond, of Monastir, of Adrianople, and of Salonica." Such was the deliberate decision of the European Powers as to the geographical ex-

tension which ought to be given to the new Province of Bulgaria, with its special privileges and its special political position.

When the Plenipotentiaries of the European Powers had left Constantinople, "bag and baggage," and when the Turks had again defied them by the indignant rejection of the Protocol of London, we have seen that the British Government had warned the Turks that Russia would be left alone to deal with them, and that for the war which then became inevitable the Porte was alone responsible.

When that war was as yet only beginning, and before the Russians had crossed the Danube, we have seen that the Emperor of Russia had explained to England that he must continue to demand the establishment of a Bulgarian Province embracing both slopes of the Balkans, and that if compelled to fight his way to Constantinople, he might have to insist on terms even somewhat larger than those which had been offered to the Turks by the Conference.

Under these circumstances the true policy of England and of the other Powers of Europe was not to be mistaken. That policy was to show no hostility to those terms which they had themselves already demanded in the interests of the subject-populations —to show no hostility even to such extension of those terms as were the natural and inevitable consequences of the war, but carefully to separate

between these and any needless adjuncts or additions, such as could fairly be charged with being conceived in the exclusive interests of Russia. It is quite true that the very same terms which had been asked by all the Powers united, necessarily acquired a new meaning when enforced by Russia alone. But this was the inevitable effect of having allowed Russia to be the solitary champion of a common cause. It was an evil which could only be aggravated by England even seeming to go back on her own footsteps, and objecting to the Russian terms, not in the interests of Europe, nor in the interests of the Christian populations, but in the interests of the Turks. Such a course could have no other effect than that of confirming the subject-populations in the belief that Russia was their only friend, that England not only cared for nothing but her own selfish interests, but had returned to the folly of identifying these interests with the interests of the Porte.

If, therefore, on the 28th of January, when the English Ministry asked Parliament to enable them to go into Congress "armed with the authority of a united nation," they had declared that they would gladly support any proposition which was really necessary to secure the well-being of the subject-populations of Turkey, and that they would oppose only such conditions of the approaching peace as might tend to establish an exclusive protectorate on the part of Russia, they would have stood on solid

ground, and would have placed their country in the position of seeking nothing but the permanent interests of liberty and of peace.

It pleased the Queen's Government to make no such announcement; but, on the contrary, to intimate that the size and the privileges of the new Bulgaria were the special objects of their hostility, and to intimate farther that they had reverted to the policy of saving Turkey as far as they could from the consequences of her crushing defeat.

With what perseverance this suicidal policy was pursued, we shall now still farther trace.

The Russian basis for an armistice and a peace which had been communicated to England on the 25th of January, 1878—was not fully drawn out into the form of Treaty till the end of February, and was only signed at San Stefano on the 3rd of March. It bore on the face of it that it was only a "Preliminary Treaty" between the belligerents, thus formally admitting that the final pacification of the East of Europe must be matter of Conference with the other Powers.

Let us now go at once to Art. VI. of this Preliminary Treaty which provided for the extent and for the constitution of the new Bulgaria.

Its extent corresponded generally with that indicated by Mr. Layard in the telegram quoted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 28th of January. 'It did enlarge the boundaries which had

been traced by the Conference of Constantinople. But the enlargement was by no means very great. That enlargement, however, included a portion of the coast line of the Ægean. It left out Salonica and Adrianople, passing both of them to the north. Speaking generally, the Bulgaria of the Conference had extended from the Danube to within a short distance of the Mediterranean. The Bulgaria of the Preliminary Treaty extended from the Danube to the sea-shore, and gave a maritime outlet on the Mediterranean to the new Province.

The new Bulgaria, moreover, was to have something more solid and definite than Administrative Autonomy. It was to be erected into a tributary Principality with a Christian government and a national militia.

By Art. VII. the Prince was to be freely elected by the people and confirmed by the Porte with the assent (not of Russia) but of all the European Powers. No member of the reigning families of the great European Powers was to be eligible.

On the other hand, by the same Article, Russia claimed for herself special privileges in establishing, and giving their first impulse and direction to the new institutions. An assembly of Bulgarian Notables was to draw up the organisation of the future administration, and this was to be done "under the superintendence of a Russian Commissioner." Moreover, an Imperial

Russian Commissioner was to be charged for a period of two years with the duties and the powers of introducing and superintending the new system. At the end of the first year two other European Powers might associate special delegates with the Russian Commissioner. But this could only be done if an understanding had been established "between Russia, the Porte, and the Cabinets of Europe." Apparently, therefore, it would have been in the power of Russia to put a veto even on this degree of European influence. It was specially explained that this stipulation was drawn in conformity with the precedents established in 1830, after the peace of Adrianople, in respect to the Danubian Principalities. There was at least no deception here. It is well known that up to the Crimean war Russia had the exclusive right of protectorate over the Danubian Principalities. Russia might seek, but she could hardly expect that Europe would consent to give to her a similar exclusive protectorate over the new Bulgaria.

By Art. VIII. the Ottoman army was no longer to remain in Bulgaria, and all the ancient fortresses were to be razed. Until the new Militia should be organised, which was to be done by agreement between Russia and the Porte, the Russians were to continue in occupation with an army of 50,000 men.

By Art. IX. the amount of tribute was to be settled with the assent of the European Powers.

By Art. X. the Porte was to have the right of sending by fixed routes its regular troops through the Principality to the remaining Turkish Provinces which lay to the West.

Without going one step farther into the Treaty of San Stefano, than suffices to make us acquainted with these Articles touching the new Province of Bulgaria, it is manifest at a glance that it was perfectly easy to object to several of their provisions without incurring the odium, and without committing the impolicy of opposing the interests of the subject-populations, and without identifying the objections of England with a desire to support the Turks. The articles of San Stefano looked in two directions, which, if not wholly opposite to each other, were at least completely different. They provided, in the first place, more effectual securities for the Christian populations than could have been obtained previous to the war. They provided, in the second place, for very large and predominant influence over these populations on the part of Russia. Moreover, the stipulations which belonged to this second object, seemed to be not accidental, but deliberate. If there had been no provision at all in the Treaty of San Stefano for any association whatever of the other Powers, it would have been less objectionable in this respect than it actually was. Russia might fairly and consistently have said that in the Preliminary Treaty between herself and

Turkey it was not her business to make any provision in the interest of the other Powers. She might have said, and said with truth, that it remained for them to make such demands as they pleased in their own interest, and that this work must be left to the Powers themselves, when, in Congress assembled, it would become their duty to consider a Treaty which was to be not preliminary but definitive. Russia certainly owed nothing even in the shape of courtesy to the English Cabinet. The language of Ministers, and of the whole Ministerial press, was the language of violent suspicion, of hostility, and occasionally almost of insult. She had a perfect right to frame her own Preliminary Treaty, on the principle that it should provide for her own demands, and for nothing more. If Russia had taken this ground, there would have been no cause for jealousy or even for suspicion in the stipulations which gave her powers of protectorate which were apparently exclusive. In that case they would have been avowedly exclusive only until the other Powers had made their demand to be equally associated. But, unfortunately, this was not the principle on which the Treaty was actually framed. It did not abstain altogether from stipulations affecting to represent the interests and the rights of the other Powers. It contained, on the contrary, as we have just seen, several stipulations in great detail, which did affect to represent those interests and

those rights, but which manifestly did so in a manner most unsatisfactory and incomplete.

There could not possibly have been a position of affairs lending itself more favourably for the English Government. They had nothing to do but to draw firmly and distinctly the line between stipulations in the interest of the subject-populations of Turkey, and stipulations in the interest of Russia alone. They had nothing to do but to take their stand upon that line, and to say that every provision lying on one side of it they would heartily support, and every provision lying on the other side of it they would require to be amended. By pursuing this course they would have put themselves in harmony with the cause of justice, liberty, and humanity—with the inevitable tendency of events in the East of Europe—and with the true honour and interest of England.

On the other hand, if this dividing line between the two kinds of stipulation in the Treaty of San Stefano were not respected, if indiscriminate hostility were shown to everything which Russia had done, and to everything which Russia had demanded, there could be no possible result but dishonour and defeat. In respect to honour, it was discreditable to range England on the side of Turkey against the subject-populations. In respect to policy it was most inexpedient to confirm and intensify Russian influence by letting those populations see that they

could trust to nothing else. Surely these considerations hardly belong to the region of mere opinion. They come under the category of axioms and inevitable deductions. Yet over all these considerations, involving as they did both the honour and the interests of England, passion and prejudice were suffered to prevail. The friends of Turkey have been accustomed to say that their opponents were swayed by "sentiment." And so they were. In the region of sentiment lies the home of the highest political truth. But it is equally true that in the same region are to be found the dens of every political folly. Sentiment inspired the conduct and the language of the friends of Turkey, quite as much as it inspired the conduct of the language of those who denounced the Pashas. The only difference was that in the one case the ruling sentiment was in harmony with justice and with the real interests of Europe, whilst in the other it was opposed to both.

Let us now see how this Turkish sentiment worked in practice, and what were the results to which it led.

We have seen that the Treaty of San Stefano was signed on the 3rd of March. It was not, however, officially communicated to the British Government till the 23rd of that month.* It probably

* Turkey, 1878. No. 22.

contributed to produce in the Cabinet some of those obscure and critical resolutions in the direction of warlike preparations which led to the resignation of Lord Derby on the 28th. Lord Salisbury replaced him as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and thus it fell to the lot of the British Plenipotentiary at the Conference of Constantinople to utter the first voice of England on the natural consequences which had now followed that memorable triumph of Turkish diplomacy.

Within a few days of his accession to office the new Foreign Secretary had issued, on the 1st April, a Circular Despatch* to all the Ambassadors and Ministers of England at the Courts of Europe, which, at least as regards its momentary effect, is one of the most memorable documents connected with the history of the Eastern Question. His predecessor in office had been occupied, as we have seen, for several weeks in the unprofitable dispute whether Russia would or would not agree before going into Congress, to declare that she admitted the whole and every part of the Treaty of San Stefano to be equally and unreservedly "subject to discussion." We have seen also that the final reply of Russia in this dispute was received on the very day of Lord Derby's resignation. It was a resolute refusal to be bound in the Congress by any previous declaration not exacted

* Turkey, XXV., 1878.

from other Powers. Under these circumstances there was no prospect of a Congress. The English demand had put a stop to it. This on the face of it was a heavy responsibility, and required justification and defence. Accordingly, the new Circular of the new Foreign Secretary was intended to give this explanation and to supply this defence.

It obviously fell naturally and necessarily in the way of an argument directed to this end, that it should examine the Treaty of San Stefano with a view to show that almost every stipulation in it did, more or less, affect European interests. In the conduct of such an argument it was perfectly fair to bring forward every conceivable objection to the stipulations of the Treaty. It was even fair to strain these objections to the utmost, and to put interpretations on the Treaty which were of doubtful validity. The putting forward of such objections, and of such interpretations, did not in any way commit the Government to maintain them if a Congress should, after all, be held. In that Congress these objections might be all successfully refuted, and the British Government was in no way bound to maintain them, if, as the result of discussion, such refutation could be given. But in the meantime they were fair arguments in support of the proposition that discussion of the whole Treaty was really required.

Viewed in this light, and restricted to this purpose, the Circular of Lord Salisbury was drawn up

with the skill of a good debater. The fundamental proposition which it put forward, and which it supported by an elaborate analysis, was the proposition that "every material stipulation which the Treaty of San Stefano contains involves a departure from the Treaty of 1856." It did not need the ability of Lord Salisbury to establish this conclusion. The Circular did establish it with superabundant force. Many of the objections which it urged against the Treaty of San Stefano were unquestionably sound. Others, though less valid, were fairly ancillary to the general contention. A few of them were founded on mistakes and on interpretations of the Treaty. But taken as a whole they represented with truth, if with some exaggeration, the various European interests which were affected more or less directly by the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano. The only objection to them, in this point of view, is that the inference in support of which they were ranged in such formidable array was an inference which Russia had never disputed. She had never contended that in the Congress, England and the other Powers were to be precluded from discussing any and every stipulation, which in their opinion might affect the general interest of Europe. What she had refused to admit was that Russia could fairly be called upon to declare beforehand that she would hold every stipu-

lation in the Treaty to be "subject to discussion." This was a very different thing.

The effect of this Circular in England was very curious. It was taken not for what it was, and for what it professed to be—an argument in favour of free discussion. It was taken to be the announcement of conclusions which were to supersede discussion or at least to forestall it. It was taken to be the statement of objections which England would not only put forward, but to which she would inflexibly adhere. The whole and every bit of the Treaty of San Stefano was arraigned and condemned. All the sections of English society which desired to involve the country in war in support of the Turks were in a transport of delight. Editors reprinted the Circular *in extenso*, as the best leading article they could publish in exposition of their own views. It was exactly what "we" had always said. Here was a Foreign Minister, at last, who would assert the position of England, and put a stop to the aggressions of Russia. Perhaps the Government were not to blame for all this. Perhaps the Foreign Secretary himself was not wholly indifferent to the pleasure of writing a slashing Despatch which might obliterate some of the impressions made upon the friends of Turkey by certain passages in the life of the British Plenipotentiary at Constantinople, and by the *entente cordiale* with General Ignatieff. It must be confessed too, that any explanation of the popular

mistake would have been difficult at the time. It might be awkward publicly to point out that in the Circular the Foreign Secretary bound himself to nothing. On the whole, it was better to be quiet and enjoy the adulation of the hour. When men are sitting as in a Temple, with worshippers before them, and amidst clouds of incense, it is hardly to be expected of them that they should blow away the smoke.

But now the curtain rises on a very different scene. The Temple and the worshippers vanish like a dream. The Foreign Secretary is once more seen "arm in arm" with Russian diplomatists—secretly bargaining for interests supposed to be British—yielding to almost every one of the demands of the Czar—consenting to sacrifice much of the integrity, and the whole of the independence of Turkey—and absolutely abandoning our previous demand that the whole Treaty of San Stefano should be *bonâ fide* submitted to the Congress.

In all this the Cabinet was consistent. Throughout the whole of these transactions it had never taken a step forward in any one direction without carefully preparing the way for a strategic movement to the rear.

I do not hold that the Government were to blame for endeavouring to come to some understanding with Russia. Quite the contrary. They ought to have adopted this course long before. If they had done

so after the failure of the Conference of Constantinople, or when both Austria and Russia were willing to co-operate in coercing Turkey, all the miseries of the war would almost certainly have been averted. But at that time they shrank from any alliance with Russia, partly from jealousy and partly from moral cowardice. Now, at last, under most unfavourable conditions, they were driven by sheer necessity to make some bargain with the Czar. They were quite right in doing so. The situation had become intolerable and absurd. Clever Despatches cutting up the Treaty of San Stefano could not abolish or nullify the work of big battalions. Neither could they bring back health and life into the bones of Turkey. The Government were not quite so insane as most of their supporters, both in Parliament and in the Press. Much as they may have desired to turn back the handle of the clock, they knew that they could not arrest the day. Much as they may have desired to neutralise the results of war, they knew that they were too late. They knew, too, that to refuse to go into Congress except upon conditions which represented little more than verbal quibbles, was a course which would simply leave Russia in possession of the field, and England without an ally in Europe. Not even 7000 Indian troops, not even six millions of money, could extricate the Government from this dilemma. Under these circumstances it was perfectly reasonable to get out

of the dead-lock into which we had been brought by vacillation on every great question of policy, and by obstinacy in little things. It was reasonable, too, as it always must be, not to go into Congress without some previous understanding with the Powers to be there assembled. Every man conversant with the conduct of affairs knows very well that public and formal discussions cannot be conducted with any hope of a successful issue unless such preliminary understandings have been arrived at.

But what the Government now did was something widely different from this. Their Circular dissecting the Treaty of San Stefano was dated, as we have seen, on the 1st of April. But during that month and the month of May they were busy in escaping from the position in which it left them. They entered into a separate negotiation with Russia, kept secret apparently, not only from the public, which was wise enough, but from the other Powers of Europe. Yet the main ground of opposition to the San Stefano Treaty, and the main hope of success in modifying its provisions, lay in the argument that the whole of it affected more or less directly the interests of the other Powers. It was impossible to enter into a secret engagement with Russia alone without tying our own hands upon questions on which those other Powers might be entitled to our support. To judge of the force and sweep of this objection it is only necessary to apply that great test of all moral

considerations—namely, the test of considering what we should have thought of any similar secret negotiation, kept secret from us, between Germany and Russia, or between Austria and Russia, or between Greece and Russia. Russia may have made some high-handed demands in the Treaty of San Stefano. But when England was insisting upon her submitting the whole of it to Congress, she could, and she did, make the proud reply, "We have nothing to conceal." It is indeed humiliating to think that when the Plenipotentiaries of England entered the Congress doors at Berlin, they could not, if they had been asked, have given the same assurance. They entered those doors with a concealed instrument in their pocket, which might indeed leave them free to discuss the "whole" Treaty of San Stefano with a show of earnestness and sincerity, but which really bound them to be contented with this show, and nothing more.

Let us now examine the nature of the Secret Agreement with Russia, which has never been communicated to Parliament, and which, if the Government could have helped it, would never have seen the light.

The "Anglo-Russian Agreement," as the result of this secret negotiation was called, was contained in two Memoranda, dated and signed at London on the 30th of May. The very first article of the first Memorandum went straight to the question of the geographical extent of the new Bulgarian Province.

That is to say, it presented as the head and front of the offending in the Treaty of San Stefano, not the special or the exclusive protectorate of Russia, but the length and breadth of the country which was to enjoy new securities for freedom. It did not attempt to negative the erection of a new Principality, which was to be only tributary to the Porte. It did not attempt to prevent the destruction of the old military frontier of Turkey on the Danube. It did not attempt to save to her the great fortresses on that river which had done such good service in many invasions. Accepting these great changes as irremediable—changes which Mr. Layard had denounced as fatal to the Turkish Empire in Europe—this new Anglo-Russian Agreement was contented with an effort to patch up a new military frontier under conditions which we shall have to examine presently.

The next provision of the Treaty of San Stefano, against which this Secret Agreement declared the implacable hostility of England, was that which gave a portion of the sea-coast to the new Bulgaria. It was specially declared that this was no question of detail or of frontier lines. The object was declared to be "the exclusion of the littoral of the Ægean Sea" from any territory connected with the new Bulgaria. Next, it was specially agreed that the new Bulgarian Principality should be limited to the country north of the Balkans. The Province to the south was only to receive a "large measure of administrative self-

government, with a Christian Governor, named with the acquiescence of Europe for five or ten years."

Then follows an article which assigns to the Emperor of Russia the desire of freeing the new Provinces from unlimited occupation by Turkish troops, and which assigns to England the wise and honourable part of giving a grudging and reluctant assent to this Russian desire. "The Emperor of Russia," says this wonderful Agreement, "attaches a peculiar importance to the retreat of the Turkish army from Southern Bulgaria. His Majesty does not see any security or guarantee for the Bulgarian population in the future, if the Ottoman troops are maintained there." And then follows the following confession of English aims and English intentions in the coming Congress:—"Lord Salisbury accepts the retreat of the Turkish troops from Southern Bulgaria; but Russia will not object to what is settled by the Congress respecting the mode and the cases where the Turkish troops would be allowed to enter the Southern Province to resist an insurrection or invasion, whether in a state of execution or in a state of menace." This sentence is very instructive. England specially reserves her freedom to fight in Congress for the power of the Turks to keep armed watch over the liberty of the Southern Bulgarians. Russia is represented as wishing to restrict their power as much as possible. England is represented as desirous of extending it.

There are other clauses of this Secret Agreement to the aim and object of which no just objection can be taken. If they had been made subjects of consultation with the other Powers of Europe, as matters of common understanding before going into Congress, there would not be one word to say against them. But, on the other hand, the whole scope and purport of the transaction was to represent England as bent on setting up again, as far as she could, some semblance of a real Turkish Empire in Europe ; and yet at the same time as yielding up almost everything which was really substantial in the fatal demands which the military success of Russia had enabled her to enforce upon the Sultan.

Let us take, for example, one sentence from the "Salisbury Circular" of two months before—the sentence which perhaps, as much as any other, had inspirited the friends of Turkey—"The compulsory alienation of Bessarabia from Roumania, the extension of Bulgaria to the shores of the Black Sea, which are principally inhabited by Mussulmans and Greeks, and the acquisition of the important harbour of Batoum, will make the will of the Russian Government dominant over all the vicinity of the Black Sea. The acquisition of the strongholds of Armenia will place the population of that province under the immediate influence of the Power which holds them ; whilst the extensive European trade which now passes from Trebizond

to Persia will, in consequence of the cessions in Kurdistan, be liable to be arrested at the pleasure of the Russian Government by the prohibitory barriers of their commercial system." Now, to every one of these formidable results of the Treaty of San Stefano, except the very last, England virtually gave her assent in this Secret Agreement. It made it all the worse and not the better that she reserved her right to keep up a show of remonstrance and of resistance in the Congress. She was not to push her objections to any decisive issue. The restoration to Russia of her old Bessarabian frontier was expressly acquiesced in. The Armenian fortresses were not to be rescued from the Muscovite. Batoum, although not taken by Russia, was to be surrendered to her demand. Well might those who had cheered the Circular be ashamed of their own credulity when they found themselves duped by the Agreement.

There is another point of view in which this Secret Agreement must be considered, and that is the relation it bears to the contention which had been maintained so long and so tenaciously, that the whole of the Treaty of San Stefano must be fully and completely "subject to discussion." This position had been held in a form and to an extent which was unreasonable. But it was not only reasonable but essential to the Congress that no two Powers should enter into it bound by secret engagements to convert discussion into a mockery, by pretending to argue

against conclusions which had been thus clandestinely agreed to. Yet after the signature of the Agreement the British Plenipotentaries were in this position: they were bound not to persevere in objections which the Agreement had overruled. We have only to look at the following paragraph in the first of the two Secret Memoranda to see that this is really the result: "Her Majesty's Government, being consequently of opinion that the modifications of the Treaty of San Stefano, approved of in this Memorandum, suffice to mitigate the objections that they find in the Treaty in its actual form, engage themselves not to dispute the Articles of the preliminary Treaty of San Stefano which are not modified by the ten preceding points, if, after the Articles have been duly discussed in Congress, Russia persists in maintaining them." Under this Agreement the British Plenipotentiaries went into Congress with their hands bound, and with their tongues only untied for the purpose of keeping up an appearance of freedom. Their colleagues in the Congress, if they were really kept in ignorance of this Secret Agreement, might commit themselves very far in support of other objections to the Treaty in a manner in which they would not have committed themselves had they known the truth. On the other hand, if the Secret Agreement was confidentially communicated to the other Powers, then the aspect of it is very materially changed. It then simply stands as a device by

which the English Cabinet escaped from the untenable position it had assumed, that Russia must go into Congress holding as open to discussion everything she had gained. By the Secret Agreement Russia had, on the contrary, secured that her principal demands in the Treaty were not to be seriously contested.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONGRESS AND THE TREATY OF BERLIN.

RUSSIA was now as triumphant in diplomacy as she had been victorious in arms. She had secured two great advantages. In the first place, she had secured the final acquiescence of England, after a mock discussion, in every one of the substantial gains which she had demanded for herself. In the second place, the Cabinet of the Queen had so managed the whole transaction for her that the concessions she made were to be deductions, not from her own gains, but from the gains of the subject populations of Turkey. It had moreover been so contrived further in her interests that these concessions should be wrung from her in a European Congress, as the result of a public discussion, in which England was to be seen contending for the utmost possible limitation of the privileges of the enfranchised populations of Turkey.

Let us look for a moment at each of these great successes. The consent of England to the direct acquisitions of Russia was very important. In Europe there was the retrocession of her old Bessa-

rabian frontier reaching to the Danube. There was the destruction of all the great fortresses on the southern bank of that river. In Asia there was the permanent acquisition of Kars, and of Ardahan with adjacent territories. There was farther the acquisition of Batoum, which Russia had not taken, and which English and Turkish fleets could have effectually prevented her from ever taking. This was, perhaps, the only important acquisition which it would have been in the immediate power of England to prevent. There is some reason to believe that the English Consul at Trebizond had encouraged the inhabitants of Batoum, who resented the cession, to expect the support of the British Government, and had even gone the length of subsidising, and therefore organising an opposition to that measure.*

* My authority for this statement is a letter from "Five Merchants of Batoum" to the Governor-General of Trebizond, in which they say :—"Congratulate the Consul (English) on our behalf, and tell him that we have made good use of his subsidies." This letter appears in an article published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1878. The article is signed by the Rev. Malcolm MacColl. The letter he gives has all the appearance of authenticity, and is stated to have been attached to the original copy of a document forwarded by Mr. Layard, and published in "Turkey xlii., 1878." The genuineness of the document is farther corroborated by an allusion in the "Protestation des Habitants de Batoum," published in "Turkey xlv., 1878." This "Protestation" refers to the particular manifestations of English solicitude for their rights, and then states that they had deputed twelve of their notables to the British Consul at Trebizond to solicit his assistance. (P. 27-28.)

If this was really done, it must have been done with the sanction of the British Ambassador at Constantinople, though probably without any direct authority from the Government at home. There is no doubt that the cession of Batoum was the Russian demand most unpopular in England, and one of those most vehemently denounced by Mr. Layard. But under the Secret Agreement it was to be sanctioned after the usual mock discussion.

Such being the direct gains of Russia, let us now look at her indirect gains involved in the concessions on which England had insisted. She was to concede to the Queen's Government that the Bulgarians south of the Balkans should not enjoy the privileges of the new Principality. She was to concede farther, that such remaining privileges as Russia was to be allowed to retain for them should be narrowly restricted in the interests of the Turks. England was to be free to contend in Congress for a variety of limitations. In particular, England was to be allowed to secure, if she could, for the Ottoman Government the largest powers as to the occupation of the country by Turkish soldiers. It was specially provided that the Government of the Sultan should, under English patronage, be free to use those troops, not only to repel foreign aggression, but to suppress political insurrection, and this, too, whether these evils were "in a state of execution" or only in a

"state of menace."* Not even the native militia—the whole object of whose existence was to protect the liberties newly established—not even the militia was to be securely organised in the interests of the Christian population. England was to contend for the nomination of its superior officers by the Porte. It is needless to dwell on the general aspect and result of these Russian concessions. They all went to identify her action and her resistance to us, with the hopes and aspirations of the subject populations of Turkey. They went in a corresponding degree to identify the action of England with the interests of the Turkish Pashas, and all this they did at a time and under conditions which made it obviously futile to revive Turkey with effect, or to trust to her as representing, even in a remote degree, those common interests of Europe which the Ottoman Empire had once been supposed to serve.

This position having been now secured for England by the Secret Agreement, the Cabinet of the Queen was no longer unwilling to enter Congress. But how was the old ostensible contention to be got rid of—the contention that there must be a full and free discussion of the whole Treaty? Diplomacy was equal to the occasion. A form of invitation was devised, which came from the German Government on the 3rd of June, under which both England and

* Article V. of the "Secret Agreement."

Russia equally pretended to accept the condition of complete discussion. On the same day this invitation was accepted. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary were appointed Plenipotentiaries of England: and the Congress was constituted at Berlin.

It is needless to say that the Secret Agreement with Russia constituted the real instructions under which the British Plenipotentiaries went to Berlin. But by a constitutional usage, which in this case was grotesque enough, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary received some formal instructions from the Cabinet through Mr. Secretary Cross. It is remarkable that in these instructions the Cabinet was obliged to confess that, in the famous step of sending up the fleets to Constantinople, it had made a false move. The very first task assigned in the despatch of Mr. Secretary Cross to the Plenipotentiaries, was the task of offering to retrace it. We have seen that this measure had very nearly resulted in the Russian occupation of Constantinople, and that it did actually result in a considerable advance of the Russian army beyond the line which had been agreed upon by the armistice. Russia had continued to hold this advanced position. Thus the much vaunted movement of the British fleet had produced no other effect than that of tightening the grip of Russia on the throat of Turkey. The Plenipotentiaries were therefore directed to offer a new retire-

ment of the British fleet as the price of a similar retirement on the part of Russia from her proximity to the gates of Constantinople.* There was one other instruction somewhat ostentatiously put forward in the despatch of Mr. Cross—namely, that the British Plenipotentiaries should urge the claims of Greece to admission to a portion at least of the sittings of the Congress.

Further instructions, however, were given in the form of a despatch from the Foreign Secretary to the third Plenipotentiary, Lord Odo Russell. In this document the general outline of the Secret Agreement was followed, just so far as it was possible to follow it, without betraying the fact that such an Agreement had been made. But in order to avoid this betrayal it was absolutely necessary to pretend that many discussions would be free, the results of which were in fact foreclosed. Thus, for example, the great cessions in Asia were referred to as cessions on which "it was possible that the arguments of England would not be able to shake the resolution" of Russia; but Lord Odo was "not on that account to abstain from earnestly pressing upon the other Powers and upon Russia" the arguments of England.† The hollowness and insincerity of character which thus necessarily attaches to this document, deprives it

* Turkey, XXXIX., 1878, No. 2, p. 2.
† Ibid., No. 3, p. 3.

of much of the interest which would otherwise attach to it. There are, however, some declarations in it which fairly represent the policy of the Cabinet. Of these, accordingly, it may be well to take notice here.

In the first place, it was declared that all the stipulations of the Treaty of San Stefano touching Servia and Montenegro, as well as the Turkish Provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, were stipulations which, though altering the Treaty of Paris, did not interest England in a primary degree. Two principles, nevertheless, were laid down for the guidance of the Plenipotentiaries in any contention they might raise. The first was, that the welfare and good government of the subject populations should be assured. The second was, that the ancient alliance between England and Austria, and the general coincidence of their interests, should be borne in mind. It was, however, distinctly added, that if Russia should be determined to adhere to the Treaty of San Stefano on any or all of these matters, the opposition of England was not to be pushed so far as to endanger the results of the Congress.

A similar declaration was made in respect to the retrocession of the Bessarabian frontier.

In one matter the despatch was candid. The provisions of San Stefano, which gave, or seemed to give, an exclusive Protectorate to Russia, were, of course, to be opposed. But it was added, that

probably "these would not be maintained in argument." This is a great admission. It proves that the only real and fundamental objection in point of principle to the Treaty of San Stefano, was one which it was well known Russia was willing to admit.

On the great question of Bulgaria the conclusions of the Secret Agreement were indicated in general terms. The new Principality was not to pass the Balkans. The Southern Province was to have the protection of institutions generally similar to those which had been proposed at the Conference of Constantinople. Great jealousy even of these was, however, distinctly indicated: and in particular it was intimated that "England could not acquiesce in the institution of any local militia in that province, unless its principal officers are nominated by the Sultan."

The Greeks were to be preserved from the danger of absorption in a Slavic population. The whole shore of the Ægean must be kept in the hands of Turkey; and the main end and object of all these contentions was explained to be that "the Sultan should be made strategetically so secure as to enable him to discharge independently the political duties which he has to perform."*

It would be needless in this work to follow in

* Ibid., No. 3, pp. 3, 4.

detail the various Protocols of the Congress. Two circumstances deprive those Protocols of more than a secondary interest. In the first place, the Secret Agreement reduces them to the position of discussions which were ostensible, and nothing more. In the second place, any reality which did really attach to the discussions at Berlin, attached to those discussions not as they appear in the Protocols, but as they were held in private. Whenever any propositions were made which were likely to raise serious discussion, the President, Prince Bismarck, was accustomed to tell the rival Plenipotentiaries that they had better go and settle the matter at a private meeting between themselves, and when they had arrived at an understanding it might then be discussed in full Congress. In this way the discussions recorded in the Protocols are but the echo of an echo. There are, nevertheless, some incidents which appear in the Protocols which signally illustrate the attitude taken by the English Cabinet and the aspect in which their country was presented to the world.

The first meeting of the Congress took place on the 13th of June, 1878. At this meeting Lord Beaconsfield made his concerted objection to the advanced position of the Russian troops at the gates of Constantinople. Count Schouvalow replied that this advanced position had been taken up by the Russian army in consequence of the entry of the English fleet into the Bosphorus. It had now been

held for three months without any serious collision. What Lord Beaconsfield appeared to want was the retreat of the Russian army, not merely to the lines indicated in the armistice, but to some unknown point much behind them. The proposition of Lord Beaconsfield does not seem to have met with any support, and Prince Bismarck, the President of the Congress, expressed himself satisfied with the Russian reply. He doubted, moreover, whether the question was not one "beyond the scope of the task of the High Assembly."*

The second meeting of the Congress took place on the 17th of June. "The order of the day" was the great question of Bulgaria. At the very opening of the discussion on this question the English Foreign Minister made a declaration which at once exhibited England in the position of contesting the whole arrangement in the interests of the Turks. It was a declaration, moreover, which implied that the British Government would have been glad if it were possible to get rid of the Treaty of San Stefano altogether. This declaration was conceived in the following terms:—"It is our task to replace her (Turkey), not upon the footing of her former independence, for it would be impossible entirely to annihilate the results of the war, but to restore to her a relative independence which shall permit her

* Ibid., p. 14.

efficaciously to protect the strategical, political, and commercial interests of which she is to remain the guardian." With this view, England laid down as her demand these two propositions—1st. That the tributary autonomous Principality of Bulgaria should be restricted to the part of European Turkey which is situated north of the Balkans; 2nd. That the Province of Roumelia, and all other territory south of the Balkans, shall be under the direct political and military authority of the Sultan; all necessary precaution being taken that the welfare of the populations shall be protected by sufficient guarantees of administrative autonomy, or in some other manner."

This second proposition conveyed the first public intimation of a profound effort of diplomacy. The country to the south of the Balkans had hitherto been always referred to as Southern Bulgaria. Even in the Secret Agreement it was so called. But now it had occurred to the English Plenipotentiaries that a new name would be more convenient. It is wonderful what faith in names and phrases can be harboured in diplomacy. It was the object of the Queen's Cabinet to divide countries which were really united in blood, in language, in religion, in the endurance of common injuries, and in common aspirations for freedom. Conscious of the inherent weakness of this arrangement, the British Plenipotentiaries had recourse to the wonderful device of con-

cealing it by a name. The country of the Southern Bulgarians was not to be called Bulgaria—it was to be called Eastern Roumelia.

This, however, is a small matter; but the last words of this second proposition ("or in some other manner") obviously admitted of any latitude of action in sacrificing or in securing the liberties of the Roumelian people. Two great uncertainties therefore attached to these propositions as a whole. First, they left entirely uncertain the area of country which was to be admitted to new securities. Secondly, they left in absolute uncertainty whether these securities were to be substantial or illusory.

Accordingly, the first of these uncertainties was urged by the Russian Plenipotentiaries; and the second of them was fixed on by Prince Bismarck.

Was England willing to include in the new Roumelia all that had been assigned to the Bulgarian Province at the Conference of Constantinople? It appeared not; and Russia urged that the former delimitation of the Conference would be the proper basis to discuss.

Then the President pointed out that the assent of Russia would probably depend on the nature of the institutions which England was willing to give to the southern Province.

As the English Minister was not prepared to enter into these details, Prince Bismarck hoped the Cabinets

most especially interested would meet in private, and then the Congress might help in completing the understanding.*

Of the private meeting which followed on the 18th of June we have, of course, no record; but when the curtain rises again upon the sitting of Congress held on the 22nd, we find that the British Plenipotentiaries had been contending for the limitation of the area of the northern Principality and for the restriction of the privileges of the southern Province. They seem to have driven as hard a bargain as they could. The other Powers, or at all events Russia, had demanded that the important town of Sofia, which is well known to be a place from which the Balkans can be turned upon the west, should belong to the new Principality. The English Ministers would consent to this only if the port of Varna were to be given back to Turkey, or if the basins of the Mesta Karasou and the Strouma Karasou were abstracted from Eastern Roumelia.

We find, farther, that our Ministers had insisted on the unlimited right of the Sultan to quarter his troops in any part of the sea or land frontiers of the new Roumelia, and that he should have the exclusive nomination of all the officers even of its own militia. The only qualification of this right consisted in the vague and perfectly nugatory declaration that the

* Ibid., pp. 24, 25.

Sultan "shall take into consideration the religion of the population." It will be observed that this was a demand in the interest of the Turks, which went far beyond the bargain of the Secret Agreement. The stipulation there was that the Sultan should appoint only the principal officers. It is needless to point out that this new demand was a still more violent departure from the conditions which had been laid down on this subject by united Europe at the Conference of Constantinople.

The Russian Plenipotentiaries now took due advantage of the position in which they were placed by the conduct of the British Cabinet. They publicly advertised the fact that Russia had given her most reluctant assent to many of the limitations and restrictions thus demanded by England on the privileges she had desired to confer on the subject populations of Turkey. There were, however, one or two of the English demands in this direction on which she must really appeal to the other Powers in Congress. Russia must contend against the unlimited power of the Sultan in respect to the employment of troops on any part of the frontiers of Eastern Roumelia. There must be some European check on this power. The mere institutions of the new Province would not be enough to protect it against the excesses of the military, "since institutions alone, however good they may be, have never protected a people when these same institutions have

remained under the protection of a military force which had no national interest in maintaining and protecting them." Russia therefore suggested that a European Commission should be charged with the duty of fixing on the points upon the frontier which were to be occupied by the Ottoman army. What was the reply of the English Prime Minister to this argument? Lord Beaconsfield said that it had been agreed unanimously "that the Sultan, as a member of the political body of Europe, was to enjoy a position which should secure to him the respect of his sovereign rights." For this purpose the Congress had given him (first) "a real frontier," and (secondly) "a military and political power sufficient to enable him to maintain his authority and to protect the life and possessions of his subjects." The Russian contention was inconsistent with these two resolutions. Lord Beaconsfield especially looked on a European Commission as evidently derogatory to the rights of the Sovereign.

The tone of the President, Prince Bismarck, was almost always that of a lofty impartiality. But as an International Commission had been one of the principal demands of the Conference at Constantinople, and a demand to which all the Powers had implicitly adhered as an indispensable security for reform in Turkey, this speech of the English Minister was too much for him. Accordingly, in the protocol of this sitting of the Congress we have

the following refreshing outburst of manly common sense:—"His Serene Highness thinks it his duty to add that on this question he cannot, as German Plenipotentiary, remain neutral. The instructions which he has received from the Emperor, his august master, previous to the opening of the Congress, enjoin upon him to seek to maintain for the Christians at least the degree of protection which the Conference at Constantinople had desired to secure for them, and not to consent to any arrangement which would attenuate the result obtained for that important object." His sympathies, therefore, were with the Russian amendment.*

At the same sitting Germany also gave her vote for keeping the port of Varna in the Principality of Bulgaria. Lord Salisbury had offered as a compromise that it should belong to New Roumelia. The meaning of this is obvious. It was the next best thing to keeping it for the Turks.

Again, at the sitting held on the 25th of June, we find that important points in the interest of the subject population of Roumelia were carried, if not against the vote and influence of England, at least at the suggestion and on the initiative of other Powers. The Queen's Plenipotentiaries had apparently been obliged to agree to a modification of the unlimited power which they had proposed to lodge

* Ibid., p. 49.

in the hands of the Governor-General of the Province, of calling in Ottoman troops in the event of either internal or external security being threatened. Three important limitations had been allowed—1st, The Sultan was not to employ Bashi-Bazouks; 2nd, The soldiers were not to be billeted on the inhabitants; 3rd, They were not to be allowed to stay in the interior of the Province when on their way to the frontier garrisons. Moreover, France had suggested the stipulation, not unimportant, that if the Governor-General should call in Ottoman troops, he must not only communicate the fact, but his reasons for doing so, to the representatives of the Powers at Constantinople. Russia, however, urged that these arrangements should be placed under the superintendence of a European Commission. This the English Plenipotentiaries opposed, and Russia took care once more to declare formally that she gave way only in consequence of the determination with which this opposition of England was maintained.*

It was at the eighth sitting of the Congress, on the 28th of June, that an important step towards the dismemberment of Turkey was sanctioned by the adoption of the proposal emanating from the British Plenipotentiaries, that the Provinces of Bosnia and

* Ibid., p. 77.

Herzegovina should be "occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary."*

This proposal, although it came from England, seems to have been matter of previous understanding among all the Powers. It was unanimously accepted—Turkey, of course, dissenting. It has been publicly stated by Lord Derby, in a speech in the House of Lords, that the virtual cession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary was part of the original agreement between the three Emperors some years before. The existence of any such agreement has never been publicly authenticated, and there is no satisfactory evidence of its reality. The belief, however, in its existence was one of the causes of that passionate outburst of national jealousy which had encouraged the Government in the fatal step of resisting the Berlin Memorandum. The antagonism of feeling which was subsequently apparent between the Russian and Austrian Governments makes it quite certain that if any such agreement existed at all, it was of the vaguest kind, and left each of these Governments free to pursue its own course as circumstances might arise. But this particular provision of the reported agreement was probably the best arrangement that could be made. It is true that the great object of Europe in respect to European Turkey ought to be, not its partition

* Ibid., p. 115.

among the great military Monarchies, but the enfranchisement of the people under governments of their own. But as regards these two Provinces, there were special difficulties in the way of establishing autonomous institutions. Desperate antagonisms of religion and of race were embittered by antagonisms still more desperate of economical conditions. Under these conditions the gift of self-government would have been simply the gift of anarchy. On the other hand, International Commissions are essentially a bad device. They are the hotbeds of political intrigue, they divide responsibility, and they are incompatible with a vigorous administration. What was wanted for these Provinces was a strong Executive Government; and in this respect Austria-Hungary had all the qualifications for the duty which was assigned to her. Even in the days, now more than thirty years ago, when Austria was the great representative of despotism in Europe, it was, at least, a despotism exhibiting some of the best features of that condition of things. The Austrian Government suppressed political liberty, but it took great care of the material well-being of its people. Nowhere in Europe were there such splendid roads, such substantial bridges, greater security for the fruits of industry, or more evident symptoms of prosperous and generally contented populations. What was bad then has been changed now; whilst all that was good has been retained. It is no longer in a position which com-

pelled it of necessity to be the bitter opponent of every aspiration after political liberty in Europe. Some portions of its people were indeed thoroughly selfish and unprincipled on the Eastern Question. The Magyar party seemed eager to assist in holding down the Christian population under the Government of the Turks, simply because that population comes of a stock different from their own. The great leader of that party, Kossuth, has lost no opportunity of reading a great lesson to the world. He has shown how little we can trust to demagogues in the cause of real liberty when that cause is traversed by their own passions of party or of race. There was also another point in the Eastern Question on which Austria had a bias in the wrong direction. She was narrow-minded and ungenerous to the gallant Montenegrins. Unfortunately, in this matter she was thoroughly in accord with the temper of the English Cabinet. Nevertheless, on the whole the permanent interests of the Government of Vienna are coincident with the interests of Europe. Austria has long since adopted the system of Constitutional Government. It has lost its unnatural hold over countries which had inherited a civilization higher and more ancient than its own. It now unites under one sceptre many various races, and bids fair to give a signal proof to the world that men of different religions and different nationalities can live peacefully and prosperously under a Government in which they are equally represented. More-

over, Austria represents a nationality essentially antagonistic to that of Russia, and having a natural tendency, therefore, to oppose and resist the pretensions of Russia to exclusive influence in the whole Balkan Peninsula. The sins and blunders of the English policy had given a tremendous impulse and an insuperable opportunity to these pretensions. It was most desirable to have some counteracting force working from a position of advantage. No Government, therefore, could be fitter for the place which was assigned to her by the Treaty of Berlin; and whether the proposition came originally from the much-suspected source of the three Emperors, or whether it came from the British Plenipotentiaries, it was probably, on the whole, the best proposition which could be made.

If, however, we look at this proposition from the Turkish point of view, it assumes a very different aspect. It was a very violent proposition. It went very far beyond the Treaty of San Stefano. Nor was there any justification for it in the actual results of war. Bosnia and Herzegovina had not been overrun by Russia. It is true, indeed, that the native insurrection had never been suppressed, but neither, on the other hand, had it achieved any great success. There was no reason whatever to believe that the Turkish Government, when freed from other contests, would have been unable finally to re-establish its authority. Nothing, therefore, could justify the

proposition, except the right assumed by the European Powers to dispose of Turkish Provinces at their will. It was, consequently, wholly inconsistent with the arguments by which England resisted other propositions involving the same principle. The independence of the Porte was urged as a plea by the British Plenipotentiaries against any proposal inconsistent with their own plans, but was discarded with something very like contempt when it was pleaded by the Turks themselves against proposals which suited the English policy.

In this case, when the Turks remonstrated, they were told sternly by the President that unless they submitted to the proposals of the Congress, they would be left to deal with Russia alone, under the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano.*

We now pass to another prominent transaction of the Congress of Berlin, which affords an excellent illustration of the whole policy and methods of proceeding of the English Cabinet. We have seen that in the instructions to their Plenipotentiaries, they had put prominently forward the claims of Greece to have her wishes represented and her arguments heard at those meetings of the Congress in which she had most natural concern. This was allowed to become publicly known in England before the meeting of the Congress. Much was made of it. It elicited general

* Ibid., pp. 118, 119.

approval. The friends of Turkey saw in it, at least, a handy weapon for use against the Slav. The friends of liberty in the East of Europe, without regard to race, saw in it, whatever might be its motive, a step which must tend to commit the policy of England in the right direction. Thus, from several different points of view, our patronage of the Greeks was ostentatiously paraded. It was not then known that by one Article of the Secret Agreement the Cabinet had already assumed that the Greek Kingdom was not to be allowed to acquire either Thessaly or Epirus. As this acquisition was the only one, except that of the Island of Crete, which Greece could hope to make, our public assumption of the Protectorate of the Greek Kingdom at the coming Congress does not seem to have been a very ingenuous device. Let us now see in what spirit this Protectorate was carried into effect, and what came of it.

At the first meeting of the Congress, on the 13th of June, Lord Salisbury gave notice that at the next sitting, "he should, on behalf of Great Britain, move the Congress that the Representatives of Greece should be admitted to its sittings."* Accordingly, at the second meeting of the Congress, on the 17th of June, this proposal came on for discussion. In the written statement of reasons read by the British Plenipotentiaries in support of this motion, care was

* Ibid., No. 4, p. 5.

taken to dwell upon every point of antagonism between the Slav and the Greek. It was urged that the "Greeks feared, and with reason, the subjection of their Church, the suppression of their language, and the gradual absorption and disappearance of their race, if their rivals should gain a preponderant influence." The two races were not on an equal footing before the Congress. "The Slavs had as their defender a powerful military nation, related to them in blood and by faith, strong in the prestige of its recent victories." England, therefore, proposes "that the Hellenic Kingdom should be admitted to fill this position on behalf of the Greeks, and to take part in the deliberations of the Congress; or, at least, to assist at all sittings in which questions in connexion with the interests of the Greek race shall be discussed."*

As on this occasion Prince Bismarck took the usual course of proposing that the question should be discussed first in private conferences, before it should be formally decided in Congress, there could be but little of a discussion. It is remarkable, however, that the Russian diplomatists took instant care, as usual, to leave England alone in the position of desiring to play off one Christian race against the other. Russia took an interest equally in all. She therefore cordially supported the English demand on behalf of Greece.

* Ibid., pp. 22, 23.

The French Plenipotentiary gave notice of an amendment, having for its object to limit the presence of the Hellenic representatives to those sittings of the Congress in which the subject matter of discussion should be the future of the provinces bordering on the Greek kingdom.

So far, therefore, England took the position of asserting on behalf of Greece the right of admission not only to those sittings of the Congress in which her own direct interests were to be dealt with, as affected by the lot assigned to adjoining provinces, but to all sittings in which the interests of the Greek race might be subject of discussion, even in provinces not adjoining the Greek Kingdom.

The curtain now rises upon the third sitting of the Congress held on the 19th of June, and a remarkable scene presents itself. Russia had prepared a written Memorandum on the question of the day. She, doubtless, knew by this time how hollow were the pretensions of the English Cabinet to do anything whatever in the interests of Greece. In particular she knew by the terms of the Secret Agreement which that Cabinet had extracted from her, that the British Plenipotentiaries had no intention of giving to Greece the only concession which was of any value. She knew, therefore, that even if the pretensions of the British Government to be the protector of Greece had been sincere they had been put forward in a form which made it easy for the Russian Plenipo-

tentiaries to take a course far more generous towards the subject populations than the Queen's Government had been or were prepared to take. Accordingly, Prince Gortchakoff's paper on the question before the Congress was skilfully directed not to resist but to stimulate, as well as to give form and substance to, the proposed demands of England on behalf of Greece. It was directed at the same time to throw upon the Queen's Government the exclusive task of using these demands as a weapon against the Bulgarians. Again, Russia formally declared that she was in favour of securing the liberty of both races. She made this declaration in language of irony which was unfortunately only too well deserved. "With the Hellenic race she has a powerful bond of union, that of having received from the Eastern Church the religion of Christ. If, in the present war, Russia has been forced to take up more especially the defence of the Bulgarians, this is due to the fact that Bulgaria has, owing to circumstances, been the principal cause and the scene of the war. But Russia has always contemplated extending, as far as possible, to the Greek provinces the advantages which she might succeed in winning for Bulgaria. She is gratified to see, by the proposals of the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and of France, that Europe shares these views, and she congratulates herself upon the solicitude which the Powers evince in favour of the populations of the Greek race, and the more so

as she is convinced that this solicitude will equally extend to the populations of the Bulgarian race. The Imperial Government of Russia will consequently willingly adhere to any proposition which may be laid before the Congress in favour of Epirus, of Thessaly, and of Crete, whatever may be the extent which the Powers may desire to give to the advantages which may be reserved for them."* Here was a challenge to the English Government to make a definite proposal in favour of Greece. It elicited no response.

In the discussion which followed Lord Salisbury, apparently without wincing, played out his part. The proposal as it came before the Congress was in the French, and not in the English form. That is to say, it contemplated the presence of Greek representatives only when the lot of provinces bordering on Greek frontier formed the subject of discussion. Lord Salisbury pointed out that this would admit them only when Epirus and Thessaly was to be dealt with. He desired, on the contrary, that even when such provinces as Macedonia and Thrace were to be dealt with, the Hellenic Kingdom should be heard. Lord Salisbury's account of his own eagerness for Greece and of the result of his exertions at this meeting of the Congress is quite pathetic: "I moved an amendment to the effect

* Ibid., p. 35.

that Greece should be present whenever any Greek provinces were in question, instead of the frontier provinces, as proposed in the French version. The Congress divided, Austria and Italy voting with us, and Turkey abstaining. There being, therefore, an equal number of votes on both sides, the amendment was lost; and, therefore, with respect to the provinces not bordering on Greece, such as Macedonia and Crete, it will remain to be discussed in each individual case whether Greece is, on that occasion, to be admitted or not."*

This was very sad. But Greece could well afford to lose that which the British Plenipotentiary had been refused on her behalf, if only he had been willing to take due advantage of that which he had found no difficulty in obtaining. Thessaly and Epirus were the provinces which Greece most desired to have, and they were the provinces which themselves most certainly desired to be joined to Greece. The accomplishment of this union was of all others in the East of Europe the change most likely to give some security for the permanence of peace. The too narrow limits originally imposed on the new Kingdom of Greece was an error which had come to be universally acknowledged. In no possible way could the rectification of that error be begun so easily, so naturally, and with so little danger to

* Ibid., No. 7, p. 15.

what remains of Turkey, as by the annexation to Greece of Thessaly and Epirus. As a matter affecting the interests of Europe this was an arrangement infinitely more important than the delivery of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the hands of Austria. It was one tending to remedy a real evil, and to remove a constant source of danger. On the other hand, the evidence in possession of the Government as to the effects of Turkish misgovernment in Epirus was, as I have shown, conclusive. Our Consuls had reported over and over again on its dwindling population, on its decaying agriculture, and on the insecurity of life and property. On this subject the claim made on behalf of the Hellenic Kingdom that she should be heard had been fully admitted by the Congress. Let us see what the Power which so ostentatiously made this claim actually did with it when the time came.

Ten days later, on the 29th of June, the order of the day at the ninth sitting of the Congress was the 15th Article of the Treaty of San Stefano. This was the Article which dealt not only with the provinces bordering on Greece, but also with all the provinces of Turkey which contained Greek populations. It did so by providing for local autonomous institutions under a Russian Protectorate.

The President intimated that, in conformity with the decision adopted by the Congress, he had invited the representatives of His Majesty the King of

Greece to make to the High Assembly during to-day's sitting the communication with which they may be charged. Immediately after making this announcement, apparently without another moment's delay, "The President reads Article XV. of the Treaty of San Stefano."

Then rose the champion of Greece, the second British Plenipotentiary, the Marquis of Salisbury, and the record of his motion is thus entered in the Protocols :—

"Lord Salisbury asks for a modification of the last paragraph (of the Fifteenth Article) which runs as follows :—'Special Commissions, in which the native element shall have a large share, shall be entrusted with the duty of elaborating in each province the details of the new arrangement. The result of these labours shall be submitted for the examination of the Sublime Porte, which will consult the Imperial Government of Russia before putting them into execution.' His Excellency (Lord Salisbury) would desire that the words 'the Imperial Government of Russia,' should be replaced by the following, words: 'the European Commission.'" After a very short discussion the Protocol records the result thus: "Count Schouvaloff accepts the text proposed by England, to which the Congress equally gives its adhesion."* After this conclusion had been adopted,

* Ibid., pp. 132, 133.

but not before, we read in the Protocol as follows:—"Mr. Delzannio, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, and Mr. Rangalie, Minister of Greece at Berlin, are then introduced."

It thus appears that at the very first moment of that sitting of the Congress, and before the representatives of Greece had said, or had any opportunity of saying, one single word—before they had even been admitted at all—the British Plenipotentiaries had concluded, and had moved the Congress to conclude, against the only claim which Greece was in a position to make. The adoption of Article XV. of the Treaty of San Stefano, with no other change than that proposed by Lord Salisbury, was the rejection of the Greek demand.

I do not say that the long vaunted patronage by the English Cabinet of the Greek claim to be heard on the lot of the border provinces constituted any binding engagement on the part of England to adopt and to support the arguments of Greece after they had been heard. But, on the other hand, if it had never been really intended to support them, seeing that they were perfectly well known both in their course and in their conclusion, it is difficult to conceive what can have been the legitimate purpose of such ostentatious efforts to secure for them a hearing. The only inference is that the Cabinet desired to gain credit in England and in Greece for a liberal and enlightened policy

towards that Kingdom, which they never seriously entertained; or else that they desired to use the influence of Greece just so far as it might be found useful as a weapon against Russia, and then to cast it aside whenever that purpose had been attained. At least it would have been decent that any adverse conclusion against the claim of Greece in respect to Thessaly and Epirus should have been delayed until the Greek delegates had been heard. To open to them the doors of the Congress only just after it had come, on the motion of the British Plenipotentiaries, to a conclusion which effectually barred their claim, was a publication of insincerity if not of imposture, from which England might well have been spared by the representatives of the Queen.

But the farce was played out. It is needless to say that the communication of the Greek delegates asked the Congress to sanction the annexation to the Hellenic kingdom of the Island of Crete, and of the provinces of Thessaly and Epirus.

When it was read, the comedy was continued by an assurance from the President that the statement which the Congress had just heard would be printed and circulated, and that the High Assembly would examine it with attention. It was not till the thirteenth sitting of the Congress, on the 5th of July, that the question came on again. Lord Salisbury

had one other little amendment to propose on Article XV. of the Treaty of San Stefano as it had been modified on his own motion by the Congress on the 29th of June. According to that Article as it still stood, Special Commissioners were in each province to be entrusted or "charged" with elaborating the details of the new organisation. But it was not specified by what authority this "trust" was to be given—from whom this "charge" was to come. Was not the Government of the Porte the safest and most trustworthy of all authorities? Could this right and duty of initiating reforms be in better hands than in Ministers of the Sultan? And so, accordingly, Lord Salisbury's further amendment was this: that after the words "charged," should be inserted the following words, "by the Sublime Porte."* To this the Congress assented—the President humorously indicating that the mischief of it might be small, since the agency of a European Commission had already been agreed to. On this occasion the course which England had pursued had the advantage of being explained by the Plenipotentiary and the Minister who was chiefly responsible for it. Lord Beaconsfield explained that the attitude assumed by Greece must be attributed to the false idea which had gone abroad after the conclusion of the Treaty of San Stefano, as to the principles which should guide the Congress. The in-

* Ibid., p. 177.

tention of that High Assembly was not, as had been erroneously supposed, to proceed "to the partition of a worn-out State." On the contrary, it was to "strengthen, as the High Assembly had done, an ancient Empire which it considers essential to the maintenance of peace." It was true that two Turkish provinces had been handed over to Austria; but this was "no partition." On the contrary, it was a mere "territorial rearrangement" specially devised for the purpose of preventing partition.

I abstain from any comment on this sort of language. But there is one sentence in Lord Beaconsfield's speech on this occasion which was something more than a mere playing with words and phrases. It contained an important truth, and an all-important admission. "Returning to Greece," said Lord Beaconsfield, after a digression, "no one could doubt as to the future of this country. States, like individuals, which have a future are in a position to be able to wait."*

This was a public intimation that in the opinion of the English Minister the accessions of territory which at that moment it was expedient to deny to Greece, were not likely to be permanently withheld from her. It was only that she could afford to wait. This means that a "territorial rearrangement," which was in every way wise, and which it was com-

* Ibid., p. 198.

pletely in the power of the Congress to decide upon and enforce, was deliberately postponed till it should be brought about by new revolutionary agitations—and possibly renewed European wars. For this result it is only too apparent that England is alone responsible. Russia had pointedly and emphatically declared that she would not oppose any larger measure of liberty which the Congress might desire to secure to the provinces bordering on Greece. There was no symptom of any serious opposition from any other quarter. But England had deserted the cause of Greece after having pretended to support it.

That these proceedings, as they stand on the face of the public papers, are creditable to the English Government, is a proposition which would, I think, be very difficult to maintain. But there is only too much reason to believe that the aspect which they would assume would be very much worse if we knew the whole. What lay behind the scenes we know only in part; but this part is quite enough to throw a very unpleasant light on the probable motives of the Government. Dates go far to prove that they deserted and betrayed the cause of Greece, because they sold it to the Turks as part of the price to be paid for the Island of Cyprus.

For now we have come to the time of the Anglo-Turkish Convention—to the time of another of those Secret Agreements and Conventions which are,

fortunately, a novel feature in British diplomacy. Making every allowance which is due for the well-understood reserve of official language—for the necessity of having in all great transactions previous understandings and communications with the Powers concerned—we have in the Secret Agreement with Russia, and still more now in a new Secret Convention with the Turks, something entirely apart from the usual course of English dealing. We feel as if we were breathing not the atmosphere of negotiation but the atmosphere of conspiracy. The secrecies maintained were not for the purpose of avoiding misunderstandings, or of escaping from the influence of popular passions. They were secrecies maintained for the purpose of betraying friends and of deceiving colleagues.

On the 30th of May—the same day on which the Secret Agreement with Russia had been signed—Mr. Layard had been instructed by the Foreign Secretary to open a negotiation with the Porte, the object of which was that England should guarantee Turkish territories in Asia against farther Russian aggression. As the price of this guarantee on the part of England, Turkey was to do two things—first, to give certain assurances in respect to the good government of her Asiatic provinces; and secondly, to assign to England the Island of Cyprus. It cannot be doubted that these instructions, although ostensibly dated on

the 30th of May, had in reality been privately issued long before ; because the "Convention of Defensive Alliance," which resulted from it, is dated at Therapia only four days later—that is to say, on the 4th of June.* But the Convention, as it was signed on that day, provided only in general terms for the British occupation and administration of Cyprus. It also gave a vague general promise to England as to the better government of the Asiatic provinces. But it contained no stipulations providing for the conditions under which the Isle of Cyprus was to be occupied and administered. It is quite evident there was some difficulty in the matter, raising as it does many points full of complication. The reluctance of the Porte to cede territory, even under the plausible limitations offered by England in this case, is well known. On the other hand, the cession to England of the Island of Cyprus was the very part of the conspiracy which it was most important to keep absolutely dark until the object in view had been fully and formally secured. The Foreign Secretary was about to sit at the same table with colleagues in the Congress of Berlin, whose national susceptibilities would have been deeply wounded if they had known what was going on. If the Turks were to "peach," the whole game might be lost, or it would be gained only at the risk of serious quarrels. The Turks, therefore,

* Turkey, XXXVI., 1878, Nos. 1, 2.

had a tremendous hold over the British Plenipotentiaries at Berlin. Poor M. Waddington, who represented France at the Congress, and whose friendly disposition to England was of immense service in framing the "redactions" which smoothed difficulties and facilitated conclusions—he, above all men, must be kept in ignorance of plots which directly concerned the long-cherished aspirations of his country. Accordingly, during a whole month after the signature of the Convention—that is to say, from the 4th of June till the end of the first week of July—profound silence seems to have been kept as to what England was doing. The Convention was not communicated to the French Government until the 7th of July. But the most critical meetings of the Congress at Berlin were being held during this very time. Under these circumstances how could the British Plenipotentiaries seriously contend for farther territorial cessions from Turkey on behalf of Greece? They had already gone dangerously far in this direction when they had proposed the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary.

It is to be observed that when the Congress met on the 13th of June the Porte had not yet signed the Annex to the Convention which regulated the conditions under which Cyprus was to be occupied and administered by the British Government. The Sultan seems to have been holding out. On the 29th of June, as we have seen, it became apparent

that Lord Salisbury had thrown over the cause of Greece. But this seems to have been about the very crisis of the negotiation with Turkey, for it was not until three days later—on the 1st of July—that Sir A. H. Layard was able to announce that an Annex to the Convention of the 4th of June had that day been signed at Constantinople, by which Annex the details in respect to the possession of Cyprus had at last been finally arranged.*

It is with regret that I have traced the apparent connexion of these dates with the proceedings of the English Plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Berlin, as that connexion appears on the face of the papers presented to Parliament. I should be very glad indeed to be assured that the facts have not the significance which has been here assigned to them.

But whatever may have been the real cause or the real motive of England in abandoning the cause of Greece on the annexation to that Kingdom of Crete and of Thessaly and of Epirus, the impolicy of this abandonment remains the same. The alternative actually adopted by the Congress, and embodied in the Treaty of Berlin, was little better than a bad joke. It relegated to the Porte itself a question which cannot be settled without the intervention of Europe, and it recommended a small "rectí-

* Turkey, LXXVI., 1878, No. 3, p. 4.

fication of frontier," which neither respected the principle of the integrity of Turkey, nor satisfied the most moderate and legitimate hopes of Greece.

Let us pass now from the method of negotiation by which the Anglo-Turkish Convention was secured to the substance of that Instrument itself. It is called a "Convention of Defensive Alliance between Great Britain and Turkey." It engages England singly and alone to defend the whole of the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan against any future demands by Russia of territorial cession. More than this, it also engages England to defend Turkey against "any attempt at any future time by Russia to take possession" of any part of Asiatic Turkey. There is no limitation of this guarantee to any one or more provinces of Asiatic Turkey. It covers the whole Ottoman dominions from Bagdad and Bussorah to Trebizond, and from Scutari to the flanks of Ararat. Nor is there any condition limiting this obligation to cases in which Turkey may be unjustly or gratuitously attacked. It applies equally to a case in which Turkey may be the aggressor, or to cases in which she may have given Russia just cause of offence and of war. Turkey may do what she likes—give what provocation she chooses—but England is to protect her against the cession of an inch of her present Asiatic territory. Thus, for example, to take a practical case which is very likely to arise: she

may harbour on her frontier wild and lawless tribes of Koords, and her officials, either from weakness or corruption, or from both, may wink at the depredations they commit on the adjoining populations in the Russian Empire. She may repel all remonstrance and complaint. Russia may have the most just cause of quarrel, and may determine to seek her remedy by arms. But England is bound to keep in the hands of Turkey the mountains in which these robber tribes are harboured. It may be impossible to check their predatory habits without the submission of their country to a strong and settled Government. But England is to give to them, through the dominion of Turkey, a permanent guarantee against any such interference with their predatory habits. Or, again, the cause of war between Russia and Turkey may be the contravention by Turkey of some other Article of the Treaty of Berlin. It may arise in Europe and not in Asia. It may arise at a time when England has other work on hand, and under circumstances most unfavourable for success in resisting some new advance by Russia in Asiatic Turkey. Already in possession of the fortress of Kars, of Ardahan, and of Batoum, her advance upon Erzeroum might easily be rapid and overwhelming. Close to her own resources, issuing from impregnable positions, free to choose her own time, Russia is to be opposed in a far distant and inland country by England alone, or

with no other ally than Turkey. And for the performance of this very onerous obligation we are to rely, as a base, on the "proximity" of the Island of Cyprus.

This, and nothing less than this, seems to be the scope and effect of the first Article of the Convention; so far, at least, as the first clause of it is concerned. But there is a second clause in the Article. In return for this vast guarantee on the part of England, Turkey "promises to England to introduce necessary reforms into the government and for the protection of the Christian and other subjects of the Porte in these territories." These reforms are not specified in the Convention. They are to be "agreed upon later between the two Powers." This clause is, at least, a formal homage to the principle that we cannot and dare not keep up the Government of Turkey at any cost to the subject populations. The grand old doctrine that the good government of these populations is a secondary and quite an independent consideration, not for a moment to be brought into competition with "British interests" as identified with the interests of the Sultan—this doctrine is, at last, formally admitted to be untenable. In the despatch to Mr. Layard of the 30th of May, directing him to negotiate the Convention, it is expressly declared that "Her Majesty's Government were not prepared to sanction mis-

government and oppression."* So far, the declared object of the Convention is not immoral, as the support of Turkey in Europe would have been immoral, when she had refused every security for reform. But when we look at the provisions in the Convention for fulfilling this acknowledged duty of England towards the subject population of Asiatic Turkey, we find that they amount to nothing whatever, except a renewal of those Turkish promises and assurances which had been treated by Lord Salisbury at the Conference of Constantinople with just contempt. The directions to Mr. Layard were of the vaguest kind. England was to be "formally assured of the intention of the Porte," &c. It is to be remembered that, so far as government is concerned, Asiatic Turkey is simply chaos. The account given of it by Sir Fenwick Williams in 1854, and which is quoted in the second chapter of this work,† has been repeated by every competent authority over and over again during the four-and-twenty years which have since elapsed. Official corruption and Turkish barbarism in every form of development have been reducing some of the fairest regions of the earth, and the seat of an abundant ancient civilization to a state of a growing desolation. If we took military possession of the country, or administrative possession of it, as we have taken possession of the Island

* Turkey, XXXVI., p. 2. † Vol. I., p. 41.

of Cyprus, it might be possible to arrest the process. But this is a tremendous work, and one which there are no signs of our having been placed in a position to undertake. We have exacted a promise from Turkey that she will introduce reforms ; but we have apparently exacted no promise that we are ourselves to be entitled to introduce them, if Turkish officials fail. It is, however, a comfort to interpret the second clause as an absolute limitation of the first. Unless the reforms are introduced, the guarantee does not hold good. If this be so, the Convention is at least not quite so dangerous as at first sight it appears to be.

Let us now return to the Congress at Berlin, and see what our Plenipotentiaries were doing there.

By Art. XVI. of the Treaty of San Stefano the Porte undertook an engagement to Russia "to carry into effect without farther delay the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians." Now, as Armenians are scattered over the whole, or nearly the whole, of Asiatic Turkey, this engagement was one which gave Russia a separate right of interference in the misgovernment of the country. It was therefore rather a difficult Article for the British Plenipotentiaries to deal with. They did not wish to betray their own Secret Convention. It was impossible to reject the San Stefano Article

without some pretence of a substitute. The result was that the English Foreign Secretary was obliged, at the fifteenth sitting of the Congress, on the 8th of July, to move the adoption of an Article copied from the Article in the San Stefano Treaty, but with the addition that Turkey was "periodically to render account of the measures taken with this intent to the Powers, who will superintend them." It is obvious, however, that the adoption of this Article in the Treaty of Berlin does not in any way effect the object of preventing Russia having a separate and concurrent right with all the other Powers to complain of and to resent any infraction of the promise given by the Turks. In the first place, it does not abrogate Article XVI. of San Stefano. And every Article of that Treaty which stands unaffected by the Treaty of Berlin stands good as between Russia and Turkey. In the second place, even if it did abrogate or supersede Article XVI. of San Stefano, it substitutes for it another Article which gives the same right to every one of the Signatory Powers. In the Treaty of Paris of 1856 there was an express Article, making the Porte the executrix of her own promises, although, failing such execution, separate action remained to each and to every Power, at least after mediation had been tried. But in the Treaty of Berlin there is no such Article, and therefore it is impossible to deny that, in spite of the onerous and exclusive obligation

undertaken by England in the Secret Convention with Turkey, we have not acquired any exclusive right over the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan. All the Powers, and Russia especially, have secured by Treaty, each and all of them, a right to call upon Turkey to reform the administration of those countries. It is impossible to foresee the complications which may arise out of these intricate and concurrent stipulations. But it is quite easy to see that these complications are nearly inexhaustible. The form in which Lord Salisbury's amendment of the Treaty of San Stefano is embodied in the Treaty of Berlin will be found in Art. LXI. of that instrument. It simply copies Article XVI. of San Stefano, and adds to it the following words :—"It (the Porte) will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintend their application." No machinery or organisation of any kind is provided for the joint performance by the Powers of this duty, or for the joint exercise of the rights which it involves. It annihilates at a blow any pretence of independence as belonging to the Sultan over the administration of his Asiatic provinces. It gives a right of direct interference to all and to each of the Powers. It leaves this right to be fought about or wrangled over by the local Consuls of the Great Powers, or by their respective Ambassadors at Constantinople, or by the Cabinets of each, according as occasion and opportunity may

arise for any one of them to take advantage of this provision of the Treaty.

But perhaps there is no part of the proceedings at Berlin which casts a stronger glare upon the position in which England was placed by the conduct of her Cabinet than that part of them which relates to the cession of Batoum to Russia. It is evident that in the secret negotiations which led up to the Salisbury-Schouvaloff Agreement, Russia had stood firm in respect to this demand. On the other hand, it was precisely the demand of Russia which was most obnoxious to Turkey, and especially to her friends and protectors in England. It affected the great question whether for the future Russia or Turkey shall have the naval supremacy of the Euxine. The Salisbury Circular laid stress on this demand of Russia as one of those which must be submitted to the unfettered discretion of the European Congress. But the English Cabinet knew very well that no other Power in Europe attached the smallest importance to the maintenance of Turkish maritime supremacy in the Black Sea. The British Government therefore found itself in the position of having to choose between the alternative of agreeing to this cession or of fighting to prevent it. Very wisely they came to the conclusion that the retention of Batoum in the hands of Turkey was not an object justifying a war with Russia. They therefore adopted the alternative of acquiescing

in the demand of Russia, and of throwing on their successors in all time to come the obligation from which they shrank themselves—namely, that of resisting by force all similar cessions for the future. This being so, it would have been at least dignified to make the concession frankly, and without any attempt at concealment. Instead of this, it seems to have been part of the bargain with Russia that she was to qualify the apparent harshness and danger of her demand by announcing that she would make Batoum a "free port." It is needless to say that this has nothing whatever to do with the value of Batoum to Russia as a naval station. A free port means a port at which no harbour dues, or perhaps where no custom duties, are levied. It does not mean a port which is to be devoted exclusively to commerce, or a port which is not to be converted into a naval station. A free port may be a port defended by the most formidable armaments, and sheltering the most powerful fleets. Yet the British Plenipotentiaries thought it consistent with the dignity of their country to pretend not to see this distinction, and to accept the illusory concession of Russia as one of substantial value. It is impossible to read without some tingling of the blood the 14th Protocol of the Congress, which relates the proceedings of the 6th of July. The Prime Minister accepted the Russian concession with effusive gratitude. He regarded "as a happy idea

the transformation at the conclusion of a great war of a disputed fortress into a free port, and into a commercial depôt for all nations." The word "transformation" in this sentence is intended to convey the impression that the condition of a fortress is incompatible with the condition of a free port. We may well ask whether it was worth the while of the First British Plenipotentiary to put forward a plea which cannot stand a moment's investigation? But the Prime Minister went on to say that, "Full of confidence in the declarations of the Emperor of Russia, Lord Beaconsfield sees undoubtedly in the advantages of the freedom of this port a compensation for an annexation which he could not approve." Lord Salisbury went still farther in giving definite expression to this fictitious representation of that which Russia was really getting, and of that which she was really promising to do. He declared "that he had had objections to several points in Art. XIX. of the Treaty of San Stefano. His Excellency in the first place feared lest the possession of Batoum should be a danger to the freedom of the Black Sea. The graceful concession offered now by Russia, if he fully understands it, appears to set aside this apprehension."* We may well be grateful for a decision which avoided war. But we cannot be grateful for forms and methods of defending that decision, which were so insincere and so humiliating.

* Turkey, XXXIX., 1878, pp. 208, 209.

The only real concession which was obtained from Russia in respect to the Asiatic conquests she had made, was that she agreed to restore to Turkey Erzeroum, Bayazid, and the Valley of Alleckkerd—the new Russian frontier being thus thrown back so far as to leave free the principal caravan and commercial route between Trebizond and Persia. It is to be observed, however, that although the new Russian frontier, as settled by the Treaty of Berlin, does not include this commercial route, it outflanks it at no great distance, and in the event of any quarrel between Russia and Turkey, or between Russia and any of the other Protecting Powers on the subject of the Treaty, Russia, from her new frontier, and from the strong places which she has acquired within it, would be able almost at a moment's notice to repossess herself of the country through which this route passes.

The general result therefore of the Treaty of Berlin, so far as the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey are concerned, was to confirm Russia in all her most important conquests, to give her a new and valuable harbour on the Black Sea, which she had failed to secure by arms, and to confer upon her, along with other Powers, a joint and several right of interference in the internal administration of the country, which is absolutely incompatible with the independence of the Sultan.

Let us now return to Europe, and let us see what our Plenipotentiaries were doing there. They were

always at the same work. Almost wherever we open the Protocols we find them fighting to restrict the area of freedom, and to keep as much territory as possible under the direct Government of the Sultan. The theory on which they acted was that everything gained by the Christian populations was so much gained by Russia. This is a theory which, when acted upon practically by England, goes a very long way to fulfil itself. Nothing could be so powerful in establishing the influence of Russia over those populations, as the spectacle of England contesting every inch of ground which was to be redeemed from Turkish misgovernment. Yet this is the spectacle presented to us whenever we open the doors of the Congress at Berlin. Thus the English Plenipotentiaries always fought hard to limit as much as possible the area of the new Principality of Bulgaria, and when they could not succeed in depriving it of some particular district, the plan they proceeded upon was to demand as a compensation to Turkey and to England, that some other district should be abstracted from the new Eastern Roumelia. In this way even the limited privileges of "autonomous administration," which had been the demand of England at the Conference of Constantinople over a much wider area, were now to be confined within geographical limits as restricted as possible. We have an excellent illustration of this in the higgling which took place over the western boundaries of the new Principality. Russia had from the beginning

insisted on including in the Principality the important town and sandjak (district) of Sofia. At a private meeting of the Powers, held on the 18th of June, the English Plenipotentiaries had been obliged to agree to this, subject to a "strategic rectification" of the frontier line of the district in the interests of Turkey. But they had given their consent very reluctantly, and had driven a very hard bargain by way of compensation. They tried to get the important harbour of Varna on the Black Sea withdrawn from the Principality that it might be kept "*in the hands of the Turks.*" Or, failing this, they insisted that two important valleys—namely, those of the Mesta Karasou and the Strouma Karasou—should be abstracted from the new Province of Eastern Roumelia.* Thus the consent of England to the inclusion of the Sandjak of Sofia in the new Principality had to be bought by Russia, either by giving Varna to be held by the Turks, or by excluding two fine districts to the south of the Balkans from the benefits of even autonomous institutions. Russia, very wisely, accepted this last as the least injurious of the two alternatives, and the new Principality was thus secured an outlet to the Euxine. This arrangement was sanctioned by the Congress at its fourth sitting, held on the 22nd of June.†

---

* Turkey, XXXIX., 1878, No. 9, Inclos., p. 27.
† Ibid., p. 58.

But the British Plenipotentiaries had not yet exhausted their ingenuity in bargaining on behalf of Turkey. At the fifteenth sitting of the Congress, held on the 8th of July, we find them working hard to make the most out of the point which still remained unsettled—namely, the strategic rectification of the frontier line of the Sandjak of Sofia. The object was to bring the Turks as close as possible to this important town, and to cut off from the Principality as much as possible to the east and to the south. The spirit of huckstering in which this contest was carried on may be illustrated by a single example. England had consented to give the Sandjak of Sofia to Bulgaria in return for the consent of Russia that the two valleys of the Strouma and Mesta should be taken off Eastern Roumelia and restored to Turkey. But on examination it was found that part of the Strouma Valley had always belonged to the Sandjak of Sofia. Consequently, that part of the valley formed no part of the required subtraction from Roumelia. Consequently, also, something remained still due to Turkey, to be cut off from Bulgaria, south of the Sandjak altogether. This was the reason why the British Plenipotentiaries had voted for the larger extent of "rectification" now complained of by Russia as amounting to more than a mere rectification—to a substantial cession of territory which had been agreed upon as belonging to Bulgaria. To this very sharp practice Count Schouvaloff retorted that the bargain

England had driven was that the Strouma Valley should be excluded from Eastern Roumelia. If any part of it had never belonged to that Province, it could not be subtracted from it, and no compensation elsewhere could be demanded for it. It is needless to follow farther this petty work. Lord Salisbury in his despatch to the Government at home, of July 8, boasted that "the frontier of Roumelia in the direction of Sofia was agreed upon in a manner satisfactory to the Turkish Plenipotentiaries."* Russia, however, had effected some compromise. The general result is that Russia succeeded in establishing the new Principality upon ground which outflanks the Balkan—which lies to the south of that great water-shed, and which consequently embraces the upper course of streams falling into the Ægean.

The same spirit was shown by the British Plenipotentiaries throughout the Congress. Whether the question concerned the area of the new Principality, or the area of the new autonomous Province, or the amount of territory to be added to Servia, or the amount of territory to be added to gallant and victorious Montenegro, the voice of the English Cabinet was uniformly given against every enlargement of the "bounds of freedom," and also, as we have seen, in favour of every possible restriction even on the autonomous institutions which it was compelled to sanction.

* Ibid., p. 187.

The one dominant idea of the British Government was to keep as much as possible in the hands of the Turks. They could not conceal their antipathy to everything which recorded the triumph of Russia and her allies in the cause of the Christian populations. If there was one subordinate agency in that triumph which might have had the sympathy of Englishmen, it was surely the Principality of Montenegro. The splendid gallantry of its people, and the long historic duration of its contest with the Moslem, ought to have commanded the admiration and the cordial acknowledgment of the representatives of the British Government. But it was not so. Montenegro had committed the unpardonable sin of fighting in alliance with Russia, and of fighting, too, for the freedom of other people than her own. Consequently, at the tenth sitting of the Congress, on the 1st of July, when the Second Article of the Treaty of San Stefano came under discussion, the English Foreign Secretary moved an amendment which it is difficult to interpret otherwise than as a mere expression of hostile feeling. The Article ran thus:—"The Sublime Porte definitively recognises the independence of the Principality of Montenegro." Upon this paragraph being read, "Lord Salisbury said that his Government have never recognised its independence, and demanded the suppression of the word definitive."* No other Plenipotentiary joined in this

* Ibid., p. 157.

demand. The Congress seems to have treated it with indifference, if not contempt. It was referred as a mere question of form to the "Drafting Committee." But in this body the sentiment of Lord Salisbury appears to have prevailed, because in Article XXVI. of the Treaty of Berlin the word definitive is wanting. This is one of the diplomatic triumphs of our Plenipotentiaries at Berlin, for which England has been called upon to be proud and grateful.

And now we come upon another more important result of this temper and disposition, which in itself is highly discreditable to the British Government, and may not improbably be the cause of great future embarrassment. By the Treaty of San Stefano Russia had not only established a much larger Province of Bulgaria, but she had stipulated for autonomous institutions, more or less effectually restrictive of Turkish tyranny, in the Provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of Thessaly and of Epirus. But she had done more than this. After all the deductions from the direct dominion of the Sultan which were secured by these provisions,—by the large Bulgaria, by the enlarged Servia, and by the autonomous institutions of the other Provinces above enumerated,—there still remained a very considerable extent of territory left to the Sultan which did not belong to any one of these Provinces, and which would have remained without any security whatever against the worst abuses of Turkish administration. Russia had provided against

this omission. The Emperor had promised in his Proclamation, when he crossed the Danube, that he had come to liberate the Christian population in the whole of the Balkan Peninsula. Accordingly, in Article XV. of the Treaty of San Stefano, after providing for constitutional securities in Crete, and in Epirus, and in Thessaly, these words were added ;—"And the other parts of Turkey in Europe, for which a special constitution is not provided in the present Act." These words covered the whole of European Turkey.

It is needless to point out that the importance of this provision became immensely greater after the result of the Berlin negotiations. Large areas of country were cut off from the Provinces which were to have independent or semi-independent institutions. Less than Russia intended was given to Servia, less to Montenegro, less to Bulgaria, less to Eastern Roumelia ; and the whole difference went to swell the bulk of country which was to be restored to the Sultan, without any stipulation whatever, for a reformed administration.

At the thirteenth sitting of the Congress, held on the 5th of July, Article XV. of the Treaty of San Stefano came under the consideration of the Plenipotentiaries. It was impossible to deny its reasonableness. It could not be opposed altogether. But the next best thing to do with any stipulation obnoxious to the Porte was to insert some condition or qualification which should have the effect of enabling the

Turkish Government itself to neutralise its effect. Accordingly this expedient was resorted to by the English Ministers. By the San Stefano Article, "Special Commissions" in each Province were to be entrusted with the task of elaborating the details of the new institutions. This was in strict accordance with the whole contention of the Powers before, and during, and since the Conference of Constantinople. That contention was that nothing could be secure which was left dependent wholly on the Porte. Lord Salisbury now moved that after the words "Special Commissions, &c., shall be charged," these words should be inserted, "by the Sublime Porte."* That is to say, the whole stipulation was made dependent on the pleasure of the Sultan's Government—than which no Government in the world knows better how to checkmate any movement in favour of purity of administration by insurmountable obstacles of dilatoriness and deceit.

At the fourteenth sitting of the Congress, held on the 6th of July, Russia again called attention to the increased importance of Article XV. of the Treaty of San Stefano, and expressed some anxiety as to the universal application of the corresponding Article which had been agreed to in the new Treaty then under consideration (Article XXIII.). This elicited from Prince Bismarck, President of the Congress, an emphatic declaration

* Ibid., p. 197.

that Article XV. of San Stefano had been adopted by the Congress in its entirety, and that "it extends it in principle to all portions of the Empire."* It is evident that, although this declaration is satisfactory in itself, it is one which records the intention of the Congress, and nothing more. Lord Salisbury's amendment had the effect of depriving the Article of all self-working power. Yet each and every one of the Signatory Powers must retain its right to insist on the fulfilment of the Article by the Porte. The result is that we have in this Article little more than a melancholy record of the shortsightedness of the English Government, and a fertile source of future contests between all who are concerned.

There remains, however, to be noted one other illustration of the policy of the British Plenipotentiaries which is equally significant, and may very probably be the source of endless future complications.

At the fifteenth sitting of the Congress, on the 8th of July, the first Russian Plenipotentiary read to the Assembly an important communication which he had been ordered by his Government to make. It set forth that Russia had made great sacrifices during the war, and some sacrifices not inconsiderable since the war, in order to come to a good understanding with the rest of Europe. She had a right to expect that these sacrifices were not to be made gratuitously,

* Ibid., p. 212.

and that the work which had been done should not be fruitless through want of execution. It was from this cause that previous attempts at the pacification of the East had failed. Russia could not accept the prospect of a renewal of the painful crises such as that to which the Congress had been summoned to put an end. The Russian Plenipotentiaries had therefore been ordered to "ask the Congress before it concluded its labours by what principles and in what manner it proposed to insure the execution of its high decisions."* The consideration of this communication was made the order of the day for the next meeting of the Assembly.

At that meeting, the sixteenth, held on the 9th of July, the Turkish Plenipotentiary declared that he "could not grasp the bearing of the Russian document." But he proceeded to make a speech which showed that he grasped it well enough. Parts of the Treaty, he said, would come into immediate execution, other parts were to be executed through Special Commissions appointed for the purpose. And if there were some parts not falling within either of those categories, for these the Congress had the assurances of the Ottoman Government that its resolutions would be put into execution with the least possible delay. What could any human being desire more satisfactory than the renewed promises of the Porte?

* Ibid., p. 232.

The President, Prince Bismarck, was very cautious and very adroit. He did not think that each State separately should be obliged by Treaty to use force for the execution of the Treaty. If the Powers engaged themselves jointly to use force at need, they would run the risk of provoking among themselves grave disunion. But, on the other hand, if Russia would be satisfied by a draft "indicating that the sum total of the obligations signed in the Treaty should form a whole, the execution of which the Powers would oblige their representatives at Constantinople to watch over, reserving to themselves the right of taking counsel in case this execution should be defective or slow," then he, the President, would entertain no objection to the Russian proposal. The Russian Plenipotentiaries accepted Prince Bismarck's interpretation of that which they desired, and undertook to prepare a draft by which effect would be given to it.

At the seventeenth meeting of the Congress, held on the 10th of July, the Russian draft was produced. It consisted of two propositions. The first declared that "the stipulations of the new Treaty were regarded by the Congress as forming a combination of stipulations, the execution of which the Powers engage to control and superintend, whilst insisting on their being carried out entirely in conformity with their intentions." The second proposition declared that they reserved to themselves the right to come to an understanding, in case of need, as to the requisite means to insure a

result which neither the general interests of Europe nor the dignity of the Great Powers permit them to leave invalid. Again the discussion was postponed till the next meeting,—not, however, before Lord Salisbury had intimated the opposition of England to any "declaration of this nature."* Prince Bismarck, on the contrary, intimated his opinion that the idea expressed in the first of the two Russian propositions would be unanimously approved by the Congress.

At last, on the 11th of July, in the eighteenth sitting of the Congress, the Russian proposal was finally disposed of, and the manner in which it was disposed of is very curious. Austria at once accepted the principle involved in the first Russian proposition, but wished it to be embodied in shorter and simpler terms. Her Plenipotentiary accordingly moved to substitute for the Russian form the following simpler draft :—"The High Contracting Parties look upon the totality of the Articles of the present Act (Treaty) as forming a collection of stipulations of which they undertake to control and superintend the execution."

Short as this formula was, it involved and sanctioned the principle, not only that the Powers intended to give obligatory force to the provisions of the Treaty (for this, of course, is involved and assumed in the very signing of such an instrument), but also that they recognised the duty of enforcing compliance with the

* Ibid., p. 253.

provisions of the Treaty upon all those who had duties to perform in virtue of those provisions. Turkey and her friends immediately perceived the danger. She might positively be coerced to perform her promises to Europe. But as this was not an objection which it was expedient to dwell too much upon, some other must be found. Lord Salisbury resorted to the truly Turkish device of declaring that "he could not comprehend the object of the Russian proposal." He knew no sanction more solemn or more binding than the signature of his Government. Prince Bismarck asked whether the objection of the English Plenipotentiary extended to the amended proposition of Austria-Hungary, and expressed his own opinion that "it would not be undesirable to express that the Congress undertakes to superintend and control the carrying out of its work, and that such a declaration would be in no respect unusual."* The Turkish Plenipotentiary did not conceal his perfect comprehension of the scope and bearing of the declaration. Turkey would not be so free as she hitherto had been to break her promises with impunity. "The Porte would thus find itself obliged to admit within its own limits the control of other States." Here we have the same ground taken as in the Conference of Constantinople, and before the war. It is impossible not to admire the imperturbable obstinacy with which Turks

* Ibid., p. 265.

can maintain their point. This speech of the Turkish Plenipotentiary on the one hand, and the strong and repeated declaration of the President that he thought the Russian proposal a reasonable one, seem to have made Lord Salisbury more cautious in any farther development of his objections. He saw that by a less dangerous course he could probably frustrate the Russian proposition altogether. France was, above all things, bent on avoiding any possible entanglement in the Eastern Question. Her one idea is well known to be to husband every resource for a contest in which she is far more vitally concerned. Italy, for other reasons, had the same desire of keeping her freedom of action unembarrassed. The simple abstention from giving any vote by England, France, and Italy, together with the hostility of Turkey, would be sufficient to prevent the adoption by Congress of the Russian proposal. Russia agreed, indeed, to modify that proposal so as to make it very nearly identical with that of Austria-Hungary. The Austrian Plenipotentiary then accepted it. But nothing could induce the British Plenipotentiaries to vote for any proposal which looked in the direction of interference with the free-will of the Turks. Accordingly, when the vote came to be taken on the modified proposal of Russia, England, France, and Italy took the course of reserving their vote. Turkey, of course, was adverse. Russia, Germany, and Austria were insufficient to carry the proposition. It therefore fell to the ground, and thus

through the opposition of the British Plenipotentiaries all executive force is taken from the Treaty of Berlin, and a great part of its provisions have no other security than Turkish promises on the one hand, and Russian promises on the other.

It is time, however, now to stand back a little from the canvas, and to regard the picture presented by the work of the Berlin Congress, not in its details, but in its general effect.

Looking at it from this better point of view, there is one great general result which is apparent at a glance. With three exceptions, presently to be specified, everything which is good and hopeful in the Treaty of Berlin comes straight from the Treaty of San Stefano. That is to say, that, saving and excepting the three points referred to, everything that has been gained to the cause of human freedom in the East of Europe by the Treaty of Berlin, has been gained wholly and entirely by the sword of Russia. It need not have been so. It ought not to have been so. But so it is. This is not a pleasant conclusion to arrive at; and the facts which prove it are a serious deduction from the benefits which the arrangements sanctioned by the Treaty are otherwise calculated to secure. But the best remedy for the evil is to be found in the frank recognition of it as an indisputable fact, and in that amendment of policy for the future, of which the acknowledgment of past errors is an essential part.

Let us now see what are the three good provisions in the Treaty of Berlin which are not taken from the Treaty of San Stefano. In the first place, the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary is, in my opinion, on the grounds before indicated, a better solution of the difficulties affecting those Provinces than the solution which was provided by the Treaty of San Stefano. Institutions framed on the model which has not worked very well in Crete were still less likely to be successful in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the second place, so much of the deduction of territory from the Bulgaria of San Stefano as was necessary to exclude from it districts purely or mainly Greek, was a useful, and indeed almost a necessary amendment of that Treaty. In the third place, the insertion of the various words and phrases which were required to substitute the right of Europe for any exclusive rights which had been assigned to Russia in the protectorate of the subject populations of Turkey, was an amendment still more valuable in respect to the principle which is involved. All these provisions, however, were mere amendments of the Treaty of San Stefano. To the first of them Russia gave her cordial assent; to the second, she does not seem to have offered any serious opposition; and to the third, so far as appears, she submitted without remonstrance.

Putting, then, these three provisions aside, and remembering that they are in their very nature nothing more

than rectifications of the substantial work which had been done by Russia, we find that the whole pith and substance of the Treaty of Berlin is a mere adoption, more or less grudging and reluctant, of the great deliverances effected by the Treaty of San Stefano. The final redemption of all the Danubian Principalities from even the nominal yoke of Turkey; the enlargement of the Servian territory; the final and public recognition of the independence of the gallant mountaineers who, in the Black Mountain, had for centuries kept the Turks at bay when all around them had succumbed; the erection of Northern Bulgaria into a Christian Principality, owing nothing but a fixed tribute to the Porte; the destruction of the great fortresses on the Danube, which had so long been the strongholds of Turkish military resistance; the establishment to the south of the Balkan of a Province, of which the governor must be a Christian, in which the Sultan cannot even choose what Christian he pleases, but must submit his selection to the sanction of other Powers—a Province in which the Sovereign cannot quarter his own army, and in which the militia is to a considerable extent independent of him; the public sanction given, by a European Treaty, to the principle that Turkey, in every part of her dominions, is under engagement to the Christian Powers to amend her administration, and that each and all of them have a right of interference if she fails to do so;—these are the solid gains in the cause of freedom in the East of Europe which the Treaty of Berlin sanctions, and they

are every one of them due to Russia, and to the Treaty she extorted by arms from Turkey. Not one of these great steps in the history of human progress would have been gained if the policy of the English Cabinet had prevailed. They all belong to that class of results of which Lord Salisbury so frankly said, at the beginning of the Congress, that England "could not annihilate them."

Unfortunately there is even more than this to be said. Not only would these great gains to humanity have been lost if the policy of the English Cabinet had prevailed, but there is the strongest ground for believing, as I have shown in the previous chapters of this work, that, in that event, the condition of the Christian populations of Turkey would have been rendered even more intolerable than before. The pusillanimous abandonment of duties sanctioned by Treaty, but resting really upon transactions of which Treaties were nothing but a record, was defended ostensibly upon arguments of international law which would have asserted for the Government of the Sultan an unlimited right of spoliation and of massacre. But in reality that abandonment of duty was prompted by motives having a deeper seat. Motives of assumed self-interest of the narrowest kind, as shortsighted as they were immoral, led a large portion of the political classes of England to avow and defend the doctrine that the welfare of the subject populations of the Porte was quite a secondary consideration compared with the policy of maintaining

and defending the Government of the Sultan. The establishment of this doctrine had a direct and inevitable tendency to make that Government more and more reckless and corrupt. Fortunately a very large portion of the people of Great Britain, which, whether it was a majority or not, was quite large enough to make its power felt, protested against this doctrine, and effectually prevented any action being taken in its sense. But they could do no more than neutralise the action of the Cabinet: they could not give it a right direction. The sad result was that in the great work of liberation in the East of Europe England has had no share, and that her official attitude was at least that of sulky and reluctant acquiescence. Everything was left to Russia, and everything was done by her.

I am one of those who think that this was a great misfortune, because Russia, although a civilising Power in Central Asia, cannot have the same character in any advances she may make among the Christian States of Europe. Her ancient and hereditary hostility to the Moslem Empire of the Turks has made her power a fitting instrument in the gradual destruction of the most desolating dominion that has ever cursed the world. She has made out of the transaction some profit for herself, as she could not fail to do. But the greatest of all her gains was in the attitude of England at the Berlin Congress. Higgling over every inch of territory, and over every item of political freedom which Russia had secured for the Christian

populations of Turkey, the British Plenipotentiaries did their very best to give to Russia a place and rank in the affections of that population which will give her an immense advantage in the contests which are yet to be. The Russian Plenipotentiaries may well be envied the opportunity of retort which was afforded to them by a somewhat vaporous speech of M. Waddington at the eighteenth meeting of the Congress. He spoke of the sacrifices which the Congress had imposed upon Turkey. To this Count Schouvaloff replied with effect, that the sacrifices which had been imposed upon Turkey "were not the work of the Congress, but the consequence of the war." It was not Europe, it was Russia, by her own unaided efforts, that had wrung from Turkey those sacrifices which were the hope of the subject populations. The Congress, and the English Plenipotentiaries especially, did nothing but sanction what they could not prevent, and limit to the utmost those liberties which, for very shame, they could not altogether refuse.

Looking again at the work of the Congress from the most important of all points of view,—namely, that in which it is seen in connexion with the probable future of those countries,—it is impossible to see in it a work of wisdom. It is true, indeed, that the public mind of Europe was not yet fully prepared to deal with the final problem of the possession of Constantinople, and the complete exclusion of Turkish Government from every corner of Europe. So long ago as 1829, the Duke of Wellington was prepared to see that

problem solved, and declared his opinion that it was a pity the solution of it should be postponed. But any attempt to dispose of this question in 1878 would probably have led to an European war, and Russia herself did not seek or desire to precipitate a decision. The Congress of Berlin is therefore not to be blamed if it assumed that something of Turkey in Europe was for the present to remain. But, on the other hand, the evidences of her growing corruption and decline had been accumulating so rapidly in recent years, and her defeat by Russia had been so crushing and complete, that not even the most bigoted victim of ancient superstitions could fail to see that, though the end is not yet, it is coming soon. Under these circumstances it would have been obviously wise to make at once such territorial changes in the natural direction as could be made with the general consent of Europe, and to do everything that was possible to prepare the way for the gradual and peaceful accomplishment of such other changes of the same kind as remain to be effected. First and foremost among the changes which might have been made at once, not only without risk of quarrel among the Governments of Europe, but with their universal approval, was the transfer of Thessaly and Epirus to Greece. They are abominably misgoverned. They yield little to the Porte, and the chronic discontent of the population compels Turkey to hold them with a large military force. On the other hand, the Greek Kingdom, which it is eminently the interest of England to support and encourage, is

unnaturally cramped and confined without these Provinces. The postponement of this transfer by the Congress of Berlin was a political blunder of the first magnitude, and there is every reason to believe that this blunder was entirely due to the influence and the action of the British Government.

Again, as regards the Principality of Bulgaria, the work of the Congress was not only incomplete, but to a large extent it was mischievous and most embarrassing for the future. It was quite right indeed, as I have said before, to exclude from that Province districts which were mainly Greek. But the device of cutting off from it areas of country to the south of the Balkans which are peopled by the same race, and with the same political aspirations, was one which can only end in mischief. The southern Province is to be endowed with just so much of freedom as must bring it into constant collision with the Turkish Government, must inspire it with a determined desire for more complete emancipation, and must furnish it at the same time with large opportunities and facilities for successfully working towards the desired end. It is an arrangement essentially unnatural, artificial, and ingeniously inexpedient. And then, what are we to say of the elaborate provisions to enable the Turks to hold the Balkans as a military frontier? Is there any man so blind as to suppose that, when the day of contest comes, this provision can in any way determine its result, or do anything but make the war more bloody than it had need to be? The

possession of Sofia by the new Principality turns the Balkans on the west, whilst the Servian State, which, in any war involving the fate of Moslem power in Europe, must necessarily take the Christian side, gives ready access to the heart of the Roumelian Province. On the east, the Principality of Bulgaria has been placed in possession of Varna, on the Black Sea, at which point Russia can co-operate with that revived and regenerated fleet which she is sure to establish in the Euxine. Nothing proves more clearly the unpremeditated character of this last war with Turkey on the part of Russia, than the fact that, although she had been free for five years to reconstitute her Black Sea fleet, she had not done so, and that Turkey was as predominant in that sea when the war broke out as if the clauses in the Treaty of 1856, restricting Russia in this matter, had never been repealed. But, of course, Russia will not allow herself much longer to be in this position of inferiority to a Power which she hates and despises. It must therefore be counted upon as a certainty that Russia will construct a fleet in the Black Sea sufficient to enable her to cope with Hobart Pacha and his successors. The Balkans will then be outflanked at both ends. We know what the worth of the Balkans has been to Turkey in the way of enabling her to stop the Russian advance, even when she held in front of it the line of the Danube, and the great fortresses of Schumla, Rustchuk, and Silistria; when she was in secure possession of

Sofia, on the one flank, and of the Black Sea upon the other. We can estimate therefore what the value of it will be for the same purpose when she has none of these advantages—when she holds nothing but a long and extended ridge of mountains, capable of being forced at many points.

And then there is another matter in which the Treaty of Berlin leaves behind it nothing but confusion. Article XIX. of the Treaty of San Stefano had saddled on Turkey the enormous money indemnity of 1410 millions of roubles. It had, however, consented to strike off from that sum 1100 millions of roubles for value received in the territorial cessions in Asia and in Europe. There still remained, however, 310 millions of roubles, which was imposed as a debt upon Turkey. In the bankrupt condition of Turkish finance—bankrupt before the war, and still more insolvent after it—this is a very serious obligation. In the eleventh meeting of the Congress, held on the 2nd of July, the Turks protested against it, and pointed out the impossibility of their being able to pay such a sum if they were to pay their other debts, and if they were to spend anything on administrative reforms. Lord Salisbury observed that, if this indemnity were to be convertible into farther territorial cessions, the English Plenipotentiaries would resist it altogether. But the substantial surrender of this point to Russia had no doubt been settled beforehand under the Secret Agreement.

Russia consented to declare that in no case would she demand farther territorial cessions on account of the indemnity, nor would she claim any preferential security over the previous creditors of Turkey. The acceptance of this as a solution of the difficulty is of a piece with the acceptance of the Russian declaration in respect to the commercial freedom of the port of Batoum. The Russian declaration may be satisfactory to the holders of Turkish Bonds, but it does not in any degree mitigate the political effect of Russia being a creditor to Turkey for so large an amount of debt. The sum due to Russia may not come before the other creditors of Turkey. But it comes before her own most necessary expenses. It comes before the payment of her army and navy; it comes before the payment of a reformed judiciary; it comes before the expenditure on new roads and bridges; it comes before every one of the thousand demands upon the Turkish Government which are essential to an improved administration.

It may be true, as the Russian Plenipotentiaries said, that not more than one-third of the revenues actually raised from the people ever reached the Imperial Treasury, the remaining two-thirds being absorbed by the corrupt and vicious system of collection. It may be true that reform in this matter would yield a margin out of which all obligations could be discharged. But this observation indicates the special interest and the special right which

Russia has acquired to make herself heard on the large and wide subject of Turkish administrative reform. I do not mean to argue that the British Plenipotentiaries ought to have resisted the San Stefano Article which imposed the indemnity. Russia had incurred an enormous expenditure to secure results which all Europe, and England especially, had at least professed to desire. She did secure them, and the Congress at Berlin did little but give to them a formal sanction. Russia had a full right to demand, after a victorious war, compensation for the treasure she had spent; and large as that compensation was, it is very doubtful whether it covered the outlay. But it is not to be concealed that the establishment on the part of Russia of such a debt against the dilapidated and well-nigh exhausted resources of the Turkish Government, is one of the grave consequences which have followed directly from the conduct of the British Cabinet. It was they, more than any other agency, who impeded and prevented that common action and concert of the Powers which could alone take out of the hands of Russia functions which it was the common duty and the common policy of Europe to discharge. It was too late at Berlin to retrieve the error. The British Plenipotentiaries were obliged to yield on every one of the principal demands which Russia had made on her own account. This indemnity was one of them. It cannot fail to be a standing cause of trouble. It is one of the many elements of

confusion which remain as the monument of perverted sympathies, of lost opportunities, of neglected duties. But although the compulsory acquiescence of the Berlin Congress, and especially of the British Plenipotentiaries, in this Russian demand, was in itself rather a humiliation, it was by no means so great a humiliation as the boastful or deceptive language under which all these submissions were concealed. We have seen from an analysis of the provisions of the Treaties of San Stefano and of Berlin, together with the Anglo-Turkish Convention, how much remains of independence to the Government of the Sultan. Bound hand and foot by a number of stipulations concerning her most purely internal concerns, and bound by these stipulations to each and to all the Powers under the most various and complicated conditions, Turkey is now not only a dependent State, but it is dependent under bonds which do not even leave it the rights which have been given to its dismembered Provinces—the rights of what are called "administrative autonomy." Yet, in consenting to these stipulations as part of the Treaty of Berlin, the English Prime Minister thought it worth his while to declare that it had been established by unanimous consent that the Sultan, as a member of the political body of Europe, is to enjoy a position which shall secure to him the respect of his sovereign rights,* and again that "the Sultan should be master in his own dominions."† Prince Gortchakow was

* Ibid., p. 48. † Ibid., p. 89.

able to administer to this sort of language a severe and a proud rebuke. He said that "he and his colleagues representing Russia had presented not phrases, but facts to the High Assembly."

Looking now at the Treaty of Berlin as a whole, we cannot be too grateful for some of its results. In the first place, it was a public confession on the part of the English Cabinet that a war with Russia was not justifiable for the purpose of preventing her from securing the substantial gains she had won for herself by war and in the Treaty of San Stefano. In the second place, it was a public confession that such a war was impossible for the purpose of supporting Turkey against the main provisions secured by the same Treaty on behalf of the subject populations of Turkey. In the third place, it took a long step forwards in the direction of the final partition of the Sultan's European dominions, redeeming from even the forms of vassalage the old Danubian Principalities, and establishing in two other important Provinces institutions which must lead to future independence. In the fourth place, it embodied in the public law of Europe the fertile principle that the Sultan is under pledge to the other Powers in respect to the good government of all the dominions that remain to him, whether in Europe or in Asia. All these great elements of good ought to be acknowledged, although most unfortunately every one of them has been due to the interests and to the power and to the policy of Russia. On the other hand, there are some great evils

connected with the Treaty and the proceedings of the Congress, which constitute serious deductions from the good it has effected. In the first place, it has postponed the settlement of some points which were ripe for solution, which can only be settled in one way, and which it is only too probable cannot now be settled without another war. In the second place, it clogged the institutions of autonomous administration, which it professed to confer upon Eastern Roumelia, with provisions conceived in the interests of the Turks, which are incongruous and inconsistent, and are sure to be the source of future trouble. In the third place, the Treaty has left the joint and several rights of the Signatory Powers in respect to the Protectorate over the subject populations of Turkey in a state of utter confusion, without the indication even of any methods of operation, or any provision whatever against the intrusion of selfish and exclusive action as opportunities may arise. In the fourth and last place—and this, perhaps, is the crowning evil of all—the whole proceedings of the Congress have exhibited the English Government as jealous of, and hostile to, the growing power and advancing freedom of the Christian populations, and Russia as the only Power which is heartily on their side. For all these deductions from the value of the Treaty of Berlin the Cabinet of the Queen is mainly, if not exclusively, responsible. They are results, in my opinion, damaging to the interests of England, and to the honour of the British Crown.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN FROM THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR TO THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873.

OUR Indian Empire is having a very marked effect on the national temper. We regard it with a passionate pride and with a passionate jealousy. These feelings are but slightly founded on any deliberate estimate of the good we may be doing there. That good may be very great, but the contemplation of it is an after-thought. It has been so with conquering races in all times. The spread of the Roman Empire carried with it the spread of Roman civilisation, and scattered wide over the world the seeds of Roman law. But this thought was not in the mind of Roman senators or of Roman generals. It did not inspire the march of Cæsar, or build the walls of Trajan. Many of those who are most proud and most jealous of India would be the first to disclaim, almost with disgust, the purely humanitarian estimate of our position in the East. They are not thinking, unless in a very secondary degree, of extended civilisation,—of the diffusion of Christian knowledge,—of the wider area

given to just and equal laws. Neither the Schoolmaster, nor the Missionary, nor the Jurist, is the symbol of that which we adore. It is the Imperial Sceptre of the Moguls. It is the Throne of Delhi.

The small group of clever Englishmen who call themselves Positivists, and who bow down before the dry bones of Comte's Philosophy, have lately been good enough to intimate that they disapprove of our Indian Empire. It is always inspiriting to see the courage or the audacity of small minorities. If these writers would help to make their countrymen a little less nervous and a little more just, in questions affecting our interests in India, they would be doing good service. But if they preach the doctrine that we ought to have no interests and no duties there—then dogs baying at the moon are creatures employed in an avocation quite as useful and quite as hopeful. The pure Instinct of Dominion, unadulterated by any other feeling more rational than itself, is one of the very strongest of human passions. It has always been strongest with the strongest races; and through them it has been the most powerful of all agencies in the history of human progress. Never perhaps has it had a more legitimate field of application than in the British conquest of India. That conquest came upon us unawares, without forethought and without design. It was begun by a few servants of a "Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies," and its strong foundations were laid by men who acted against the

orders of Directors, against the policy of the Crown, and against the jealousy of Parliament. It grew out of the pure ascendency of superior mind. It upset nothing which was worth preserving. The Mahomedan conquerors of India had spent their force, and the Empire they founded had sunk far in that irremediable decline which is now visibly affecting every Moslem Government in the world. The thrones of Hindostan had long been the prize of every Palace intriguer, or the prey of every soldier of fortune. Our conquest of India has not been effected by foreign troops, but mainly by the native races yielding themselves to our cause, and fighting for it with incorruptible devotion. The power of inspiring that devotion, and of yoking it to our service, are the best title and the best justification of the Empire which it has won.

But the pride of possession and the instinct of dominion, like all other primary passions of the mind, are liable to irrational excesses and dangerous abuse. And never has this abuse been more signally illustrated than in the temper of mind which has been engendered in a very large section of English politicians. In particular, the jealousy and the fear of Russia have become a mania. It dictates towards that Power a policy of chronic suspicion, only varied by paroxysms of undignified alarm. This is bad enough, but it is not the worst. The fact that Russia is a Power possessed of an Asiatic Empire much older than that

of England, that she is advancing her possessions there from analogous causes and with like effects, and that she may therefore ultimately come into a geographical position co-terminous with our own—this is a fact and a prospect which it is wise to bear in mind, and which must influence our conduct in many ways. But that influence ceases to be safe or legitimate when it overbears every other consideration, and sits like a nightmare on every conception we have of our duties in foreign policy, whether in Europe or in Asia. It is not too much to say that this is what the fear and the hatred of Russia have come to be. On account of it, the Government of Lord Aberdeen was seriously blamed for not having widened the area of bloodshed in the Crimean contest, and for not having aimed at raising revolutionary wars in Poland and in the Caucasus. On account of it, we have a man so able and so experienced as Sir Henry Rawlinson implying regret that we had not then spent the blood and the treasure of England in securing the assistance and in establishing the independence of the most ruthless savages that exist in any portion of the world.* On account of it, we think it legitimate to support in Europe the corrupt and desolating Government of the Turks, and to proclaim openly that we consider the welfare of the subject populations of Turkey as a matter of secondary consideration. On account of

* See Memorandum, No. 12B, p. 31, in Afghanistan Corresp., 1878.

it, forty years ago, we plunged into a most unrighteous war beyond the boundaries of India, shedding the blood, and interfering with the independence, of a people with whom we had not even a decent pretext of quarrel. On account of it, we desire that the vast spaces of Central Asia, with their few swarming areas of population, should be kept the perpetual hunting-ground of tribes whose whole business is to rob caravans and to steal men. On account of it, we exhibit ourselves to the princes and peoples of India as in a state of constant trepidation whenever some Kaufmann moves, and when he subjects to a Government comparatively civilised some barbarous Khan who has hitherto lived upon the Slave Trade. On account of it—and this is, perhaps, worst of all—we are now to see English Secretaries of State instructing the Viceroy of India to practise deceit in our dealings with a neighbour, and to make "ostensible" demands upon him which are to cover a direct breach of faith.

In the preceding Chapters we have traced the working of this spirit in the politics of Europe. Let us now trace its workings in the politics of India.

Two separate narratives have been given to us on the authority of her Majesty's Government, of the events and transactions which I am about to review. One of these is contained in Lord Lytton's Despatch, dated May 10th, 1877.* It was written at Simla when

* Afghan Corresp. I. 1878, No. 36, p. 160.

it became necessary for the Viceroy to give an account of his policy. The other of these narratives is contained in the despatch of Lord Cranbrook, dated November 18th, 1878.* It was published in the newspapers a fortnight before the Session of Parliament which began on the 5th December, 1878, when it became necessary for the Cabinet to present its policy in the most favourable aspect, and when, for that purpose, it was very important to anticipate the production of the Papers. Both of these narratives are misleading on matters of fundamental importance. Fully to expose all the inaccuracies woven into the very texture of these documents, it would be necessary to occupy much more space than I can here afford. But the narrative now presented will traverse both those other narratives at many points ; and these will be noticed as we proceed. For convenience, and to avoid personality as far as it may be possible to do so, I shall refer to Lord Lytton's Despatch as the "Simla Narrative," and to Lord Cranbrook's Despatch as the "London Narrative."

The lesson on Frontier Policy which during many years most powerfully impressed the Anglo-Indian mind was the lesson read by that solitary horseman who, on the 13th of January, 1842, staggered, half-unconscious, into the gate of Jellalabad.† He was

---

* Ibid., No. 73, p. 260.

† Kaye's War in Afghanistan, vol. ii. p. 217.

the sole survivor of a British army—the only man who, out of that army and out of all its followers, had escaped captivity or death. It may be true that the terrible completeness of this memorable catastrophe was due to the incapacity of the officers in command of the British Army of Occupation in Cabul. It is certainly true that, so far as the mere military honour and reputation of England is concerned, these were speedily re-asserted and vindicated with complete success. But it was impossible for the Indian Government of that time, and it is impossible for any historian of it now, to look back upon the political struggle in Afghanistan which had been gallantly maintained by Sir William Macnaghten and Sir Alexander Burnes, without seeing and feeling that the position in which we had been placed by Lord Palmerston's or Lord Auckland's Afghan expedition had been a thoroughly false position. We had interfered with the independence of a people with whose independence we had no right to interfere, and whose independence, moreover, it was above all things our interest to maintain. The particular object of our interference had been as foolish as it was unjust. We had opposed ourselves to a brave and an able Prince, and we had sought to set up in his stead a man who was naturally weak, and whom we had induced to be a traitor to his country and to his race. For this miserable purpose we had been drawing heavily on the resources of the people of India, and were involved in an undertaking which must have taxed those re-

sources more and more. Above twenty millions of money had been spent out of the revenues of India, first in inducing, and then in retrieving, a great disaster. It is possible, indeed, that by reckless perseverance, and by an enormous military expenditure, we might have completed the conquest of Afghanistan. But the cost and the embarrassment of such a conquest, so far in advance of our own frontiers, of our resources, and of our bases of operation, had been brought home to the convictions of every statesman both in India and at home. With universal approbation, and with complete success, confession was made of the great error we had committed. We soon found it to be our best policy to swear friendship with the gallant man whom we had for a time expelled from his throne, and we made him during the rest of his life our firm and faithful ally.

But if that terrible Afghan expedition made an indelible impression on the mind of English and of Indian statesmen, we cannot wonder if it made an impression not less indelible on the minds of the Afghans. Not to dwell on the personal grievances which many of them had borne from the conduct of our men and officers when resident in the country—grievances which the historian of the war, however unwilling, has been compelled to mention—the proud chiefs of a proud race had seen us disposing of the Government of their country at our pleasure, pulling down one and setting up another. They had seen us

conferring the Crown upon a man who at our instigation had consented to make her people tributary to their great enemy, Runjeet Singh, and to his Sikh Empire. Our Political Agents, wherever they were stationed, assumed to be, and actually were, the supreme governors of the country. It was impossible that the Afghans could assign this conduct to any other motive than a desire to subjugate their country, and reduce it to the condition of a province of our Empire. And if this impression was strong at the close of the Afghan war, there was much to keep it alive in subsequent events. We talk coolly of the gigantic strides—this is the stock phrase—made by Russia in her career of Asiatic conquest. But her gains have been as nothing to the gains of the British Empire during the same period in conquests and annexations.

The strides must be gigantic which an Empire takes when it has to cross deserts which are two thousand miles long by more than a thousand miles in breadth.* But the gigantic length of such strides takes something out of the vigour of the organism which is impelled to make them, and does not necessarily bring it much nearer to new sources of vitality. During the forty years which have elapsed since the first Afghan war, we have conquered and annexed provinces containing many times more millions of

* Rawlinson Memorandum, Afghan Corresp. I. 1878, p. 31.

men than exist in all the Khanates of Central Asia between the Volga and the Wall of China.* Afghans, who in their youth may have assisted in the massacres of Macnaghten and of Burnes, are not now old men. But they have lived to see the Government of British India annex Oude with eleven millions of population; conquer the Punjaub, with a population of more than seventeen millions; and subdue the country of the Ameers of Scinde, with a population of more than two millions. That is to say that within a period of less than forty years we have absorbed and conquered countries with a population of upwards of thirty millions. These are "gigantic strides" indeed, not "gigantic" like the strides of Russia, in the width and in the poverty of the distances traversed and of the regions gained,—but gigantic in the resources they have opened up, and in the treasures of which they have put us in possession. They are all annexations and conquests lying well into our former possessions, filling up and consolidating the boundaries of Empire. They are Provinces prolific as recruiting grounds, and some of them rich in the resources of revenue. The Afghans have seen from their

* The whole population of the immense stretch of country inhabited by the Tekeh Turcomans, which extends from Kizil Arvat to beyond Merve, is roughly calculated at about one million souls. See Article VIII. in *Quarterly Review*, January, 1879, which I think I cannot be wrong in assigning to the authorship of Sir Henry Rawlinson.

hill-tops all these leaps and bounds of British dominion, bringing that dominion close up to the foot of their own mountains, and giving ready access to the defiles by which their Capital is approached. Nor have they been unobservant spectators of the method by which some of these annexations have been brought about. They must have seen that this method has often stood in close connexion with the previous establishment of resident British officers, political or military, in the States which have been absorbed. The demands these officers have made on the Native Governments, the interferences they have practised with Native rule, the reports they have sent up of Native abuses and of Native maladministration, have been the usual and regular preliminaries of British annexation. And even where the internal independence of tributary or protected States is professedly respected it is notorious in India, and is well known to all our neighbours, that the presence of British officers in an official position in Native States—however necessary it may be for our purposes—is an arrangement which generally ends in making those officers the centre of authority.

It is in the light of these facts and of these memories that we are to estimate every jealousy of the Afghans, and every promise given to them in the way of reassurance by ourselves. It was our object to convince them of the reality of our

reformed intentions, and of the sincerity with which we desired to avoid for the future every approach to interference. The pledges on this subject which we gave with a view to regain their confidence are to be construed in the spirit as well as in the letter. We knew what they had in their minds, and they knew what we had in ours. The Treaty concluded by Lord Dalhousie with Dost Mohammed, in 1855, was signed and negotiated by Sir John Lawrence as Chief Commissioner of the Punjab. In him the restored Sovereign of Cabul had to deal with one whose powerful character, and whose resolute sincerity of purpose, constitute the very type of all that is best and noblest in the Indian Services. Through him mainly the confidence of the Ameer was securely gained; and it is important to observe what the engagement on our part was which Dalhousie and Lawrence knew to be the one most desired. The first Article of the Treaty may be considered formal; but the second contains the promise which was the price of friendship. We promised to respect the territories then in the possession of the Ameer, "and never to interfere therein."* In the third Article a similar engagement on the part of the Ameer towards us and towards our territories, gave a sort of diplomatic reciprocity to the transaction: but in the third Article the Ameer gave a pledge to us for which in

* Ibid., No. 1, p. 1.

reality there was no other return on our part than the promise we had given in the second. For at the conclusion of the third Article, after the words of mere reciprocity, these words were added as a special engagement on the part of the Ameer,—"and to be the friend of the friends and enemy of the enemies of the Honourable East India Company." This was a really onerous undertaking on the part of the Ameer, and one which was of great value to us. It was a Treaty binding him to assist us against all enemies, whilst on our part it was a Treaty involving no similar obligation towards the Ameer. As against the Ameer it was a Treaty of alliance, offensive, and defensive. As against us, it had no such character. In this respect the covenant was essentially one-sided. And yet the Ameer did not hesitate to sign it—under no other inducement than the one great promise we gave him in the second clause, that we should never interfere in his dominions.

The next Treaty which we concluded with Dost Mohammed was one which arose out of a temporary cause, and the greater part of which ceased to be operative when that cause had been removed. England in 1857 went to war with Persia on account of the seizure of Herat by that Power, and on account of the farther intentions which were ascribed to it of attacking the possessions of Dost Mohammed. We agreed to subsidise the Ameer largely during the war with Persia to enable him to defend his territories. But

we gave this subsidy on conditions. The object of these conditions was to see that the money was properly applied to the purposes of defence for which it was given. There was no other possible method of doing this than that of sending British officers with suitable establishments to the cities and frontiers of Cabul, wherever an Afghan army might be assembled to act against the Persians. Accordingly, a Treaty was concluded for this purpose on the 26th of January, 1857. By the fourth Article, British officers were to be our Agents in Afghanistan for the prosecution of that particular war. But this was strictly the limit of their Mission, both as regarded their duties, and as regarded the spots at which they were to be stationed. Three places, and three places only, were specifically mentioned as points where British officers might be stationed. These were Cabul, Kandahar, and Balkh. But the sole purpose of the Mission was still more clearly indicated in the words which followed—"or wherever an Afghan army may be established against the Persians." Their duty was specified with equal jealousy. "It will be their duty to see generally that the subsidy granted to the Ameer be devoted to the military purpose for which it is given, and to keep their own Government informed of all affairs."* But even this was not deemed enough. Lest it should be construed

* Ibid., No. 2, p. 2.

as even approaching "interference," the same Article limited the information which the Ameer promised to give our officers to "all military and political matters connected with the war." And yet, although this mission of British officers into Cabul was for the purpose of defending the Ameer, or of assisting him at least to defend himself, so clearly was it recognised as an arrangement which in itself would be distasteful to the Ameer, and a departure from the promises given in the previous and permanent Treaty of 1855, that a special Article, the seventh, was inserted in the new Treaty, expressly providing that, "Whenever the subsidy should cease the British officers were to be withdrawn from the Ameer's country."

There could be no more emphatic testimony than this as to the understanding both of the Ameer and of the Indian Goverment as to inseparable connexion between the residence of British officers in the Afghan country and the "interference" which we had promised never to repeat. But the seventh Article does not end there. It proceeds to indicate another arrangement which would be in consonance with the promises of 1855, and which, therefore, it was agreed by both parties might be adopted instead of that which was forbidden. The Ameer did not desire to be without official intercourse with the British Government. But he did desire, above all things, that such intercourse should not be carried

on through a British, that is to say, an European officer, resident in Afghanistan. Accordingly, the seventh Article concluded by declaring it to be understood that the British Government might at its pleasure appoint an Agent (Vakil) at Cabul, with the express reservation and condition in respect to the nationality of such Agent, that he was "not to be a European officer."*

There could be no more conclusive evidence than this of the complete understanding of both contracting parties as to what was, and as to what was not, consistent with the solemn promise we had given to Dost Mohammed "never to interfere" in his dominions. And it is the more important to observe this evidence, as it is contained in an Article of the Treaty of 1857, which necessarily survives all the Articles which were of a purely temporary character. It remained as binding on us in 1878 as it was in 1857.

There are few parts of the Simla Narrative more inaccurate than the paragraphs in which it refers to this Treaty of 1857. I must add that there are few parts of it in which the inaccuracies have a more obvious bearing upon the object with which that Narrative was composed. That object was to defend a policy of insisting on the residence of British officers as Political Agents in Afghanistan. For this purpose it is, of course, convenient so to represent the transac-

* Ibid., p. 2.

tions recorded in the Treaty of 1857 as to give them the aspect of a precedent. But in order to support this view it is necessary either wholly to suppress, or to throw into the shade, those parts of the Treaty which define and limit so very strictly the duties assigned to the British officers who were then to be sent into Afghanistan. Accordingly, in the Simla Narrative (paragraphs 3-4) all this is boldly and at the same time dexterously done. There is no mention whatever made of the principal duty of the officers —namely, that of seeing that the subsidy was applied to the purposes for which it was given. This limitation of the Treaty is suppressed. Next, in obvious connexion with the same purpose, exaggerated prominence is given to the duty of "keeping the Indian Government informed of all affairs"—this duty being so represented as if it were the principal one,—as it would be the principal duty of officers sent as Residents. Again, no mention is made of the limitation of the Article at its close—a limitation which distinctly points to "matters connected with the war" as the only matters on which the Ameer was to keep our officers informed. But, lastly—and this is worst of all—in the Simla Narrative a duty is expressly assigned to our "officers" under the Treaty of 1857, which is not only not included in the Treaty, but which is therein expressly excluded. It so happens, moreover, that is precisely the kind of duty for which it was most desirable to assert a precedent.

The words of the Simla Narrative are these:—"Their duty (in the performance of which the Ameer was expected to afford them every facility) being simply to give advice when required, and to obtain all the information needed by our Government."* Now, the words of the Treaty carefully and expressly exclude this duty of "advice," which the Simla Narrative as carefully and as expressly asserts. The words of the Treaty are these:—"They will have nothing to do with the payment of the troops, or advising the Cabul Government." (Art. 4.)† It cannot, therefore, be too emphatically asserted, that so far from the Treaty of 1857 affording any precedent for attempting to force European officers upon the Ameers of Afghanistan, as our Agents in the country for any purpose whatever, the Treaty of 1857, on the contrary, proves to demonstration that we bound ourselves not to do so, and placed on record in a solemn Treaty our full and free acquiescence in that well-known policy of the Afghan Government, which made them irreconcilably hostile to any such arrangement.

We have the evidence of Lord Lawrence, that when he personally met Dost Mohammed at Peshawur in February, 1857, immediately after the conclusion of this Treaty, the Ameer showed no inclination to regard with any favour even such interference on the part of the British Government as might be required.

---

* Ibid., p. 160. † Ibid., p. 2.

to secure his own dynastic succession, aud thus avert the evils of civil war. He told Sir J. Lawrence "that it was his wish and the earnest desire of all Afghans that we should not interfere in their quarrels, but should allow them to manage their own concerns and to fight out and settle their own domestic broils in their own way."* The attempt to settle those feuds in our way had, indeed, not been so successful as to hold out any inducement to the Indian Government to try the experiment again.

It was in compliance, therefore, not only with the settled policy, but with the definite engagements of the British Government, that when in June, 1863, Dost Mohammed died, and a contest arose among the members of his family for the vacant throne, the Indian Government acknowledged the right of the Afghan Chiefs and people to settle the right of succession for themselves. It was impossible for us to settle it. We had not the knowledge enabling us to do so with justice, or with any prospect of success. Even, if we could be sure of the best man, he might very easily become the worst on account of our patronage. The Afghans had not forgotten the disgraceful conditions to which we had forced Shah Soojah to submit, as our client, and as the vassal of the Sikhs. Presumably the best Ruler of Afghanistan would be the man who in such a contest, should, without any help from us, prove himself to be the strongest.

* Ibid., p. 60.

There is, however, in such matters no possibility of acting upon any rule so absolute as to dispense with the exercise of some discretion. It is obvious that the policy of recognising every Ruler of Cabul who was able to make good his position, and had secured the allegiance of the people, was a policy which left open to the Government of India the exercise of a very important, and, it might be, of a very difficult discretion, namely, that of deciding on the measure of success which was to be regarded as conferring on any one of the contending Princes a fair claim to be recognised as *de facto* Ameer. In the condition of society which prevails in Afghanistan, it is impossible to be sure of the permanence of any victory, or to foresee the counter-revolutions which may arise. Defeated Chiefs have the habit of retiring to the protection of neighbouring and rival Governments, and of thence emerging as opportunities may arise, to gain or re-establish their ascendency. It was therefore perfectly consistent with the declared policy of the Government of India to prolong or to cut short, in each particular case, the period of suspense, and to confer the benefit of its recognition, whatever that might be, upon any Ruler whom it could fairly regard as having won his crown.

The action taken by the Government of India on the death of Dost Mohammed, and during the civil war which followed, was governed by an honest desire to do what was just and prudent. The severe illness

of the Viceroy, Lord Elgin, at the moment when Shere Ali announced his father's death, and his own succession to the throne, together with the doubts entertained as to the security of his position, led to some delay in acknowledging him as Ameer of Cabul. But as he had been designated to the succession by his father, and as he was in actual possession of Cabul, this recognition was accorded to him by the acting Governor-General, Sir William Denison, on the 23rd of December, 1863.*

When Sir J. Lawrence assumed the Government of India, in the same month, as successor of Lord Elgin, he found this question settled and this recognition given. After nearly two years and a half of civil war, however, the fortunes of Shere Ali were reduced to so low an ebb that the British native Agent at Cabul, overstepping the limits of his functions, was induced to make overtures of friendship on behalf of the British Government to Sirdar Azim Khan, one of the rival brothers. For this act he was recalled by the Government of India, and Sir J. Lawrence recorded in a despatch, dated the 21st April, 1866, his opinion that "the cause of the Ameer Shere Ali was by no means finally lost, and that the Government considered that until such a result was reached, they were bound equally by good faith and by considerations of policy to recognise no other chief as Ameer of Afghan-

* Ibid., p. 8.

istan."* At last, however—in February, 1867—Shere Ali was driven from Cabul, and took refuge in Herat. The Government of India then thought it necessary to recognise the successful brother as Ameer of Cabul and Candahar, but continuing to recognise Shere Ali as Ameer of the Province of Herat, of which he still held possession.†

Sir J. Lawrence explained to Ufzul Khan that the British Government deplored the dissensions of the great Barukzye House, and the calamities they had brought on the Afghan people: that though the Viceroy felt pity for Shere Ali Khan, he was disposed to hail hopefully any event which might bring Afghanistan nearer to the attainment of a strong Government. He assured Ufzul Khan that he had not interfered by any secret aid to Shere Ali, as had been falsely alleged. He gave him to understand that the recognition of the British Government was due to nothing but his own gallantry and success; and he declared that if, unhappily, the struggle for supremacy was not concluded, the Viceroy would pursue the same course of siding with neither party.

It is important to observe that in this official communication to the new Ameer, Ufzul Khan, the Viceroy of India was careful to intimate still more in detail his own scrupulous adherence to the promises given in 1856 and in 1857 to Dost Mohammed. He

* Ibid., p. 9. † Ibid., No. 7, pp. 12, 13.

reminded the Ameer of the seventh Article of the Treaty of 1857, which entitled the British Government to accredit to Cabul "a Vakeel," not a European officer; he intimated that in accordance with this provision of the Treaty, "a Mahomedan gentleman of rank and character would be deputed as representative of the Viceroy at his Highness' Court."*

It has been represented in recent controversy that this policy of abstention and non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan was a policy founded entirely on local considerations, and did not take into contemplation the questions which were looming in the distance beyond the farthest boundaries of that country. But there is no truth whatever in this representation. The advances of Russia in Central Asia, and also the possibility of her acting as she had already done through the agency of Persia, were contingencies not only present to the mind of Sir J. Lawrence and of his Council, but expressly referred to as an important element in the consideration of the best and safest course to be pursued. With reference to both contingencies, he considered non-interference in the Afghan civil war expedient, because whatever Ruler might gain the upper hand would be disposed by the necessities of his position to rely rather upon the British Government than upon any other Power; and because whatever temporary alliances he might have been

* Ibid., p. 14.

induced to form during the contest would probably be abandoned when he had attained success. But in the contrary event Sir J. Lawrence did not intend to bind himself to the same course. On the contrary, the Viceroy never had it out of view that any external interference on the part of other Governments with the affairs of Afghanistan, or any intriguing on the part of its Rulers with our enemies beyond, would of necessity bring the policy of abstention to an end, and would compel us to adopt counter-movements. Accordingly, when in September, 1867, reports reached the Government of India that Shere Ali, then Ameer or Ruler of Herat, was entering into intrigues with Persia, the Viceroy and his Council at once expressed their opinion in an important despatch to the Government at home,* that it "might be highly for the interests of British India to declare the Treaty then subsisting between us and Shere Ali at an end," and openly to assist his opponents at Cabul, with money and with arms, if they were at all likely to form a stable rule. In pursuance of this policy,—not of abstention, but of active interference,—Shere Ali was warned by the Viceroy, that if he allied himself with Persia, the British Government would at once take part against him.†

It was in this despatch that the Government of India first drew special attention to the advances of Russia in

* Ibid., No. 10, pp. 18, 20. † Ibid., paras. 6, 7, pp. 19, 20.

Central Asia, which Sir J. Lawrence and his colleagues said had been lately rapid, and which had from time to time been forced upon their notice. It was pointed out that the influence of Russia would soon be, or had already become, paramount in Samarcand and Bokhara, as for some time past it had been in Kokhand. It was in this despatch also that the Viceroy suggested to Her Majesty's Cabinet the expediency of coming to some understanding, or even some engagement with the Government of Russia, which would enable us to look without anxiety or apprehension at the proceedings of Russia on her southern frontier, and to welcome the civilising effects of her Government on the wild Turks of the Steppe, and on the bigoted and exclusive Governments of Bokhara and Kokhand; while Russia, on the other hand, assured of our loyal feeling in the matter, would have no jealousy in respect of our alliance with the Afghan and neighbouring tribes. The principle indicated as the basis of such an agreement was this: "that up to a certain border the relations of the respective Governments should be openly acknowledged and admitted as bringing them into necessary contact and Treaty with the Tribes and Nations on the several sides of such a line."*

In the face of this despatch it is impossible to contend that the Government of India, under Sir J. Law-

* Ibid., pp. 20, 1.

rence, was not fully awake to the contingencies arising out of the progress of Russia in Central Asia. And be it observed, that no subsequent event has brought these contingencies nearer home than the events indicated by Sir J. Lawrence and his colleagues. Bokhara is a country actually marching with Afghanistan for many hundred miles, and the paramount influence of Russia there is a much more significant fact than her advance on distant Khiva, or the absorption of a part of that Khanate into her own dominions. In all the revolutions of Afghanistan Bokhara had played an important part. It has been the refuge of every fugitive Ameer, and the two States have with each other many hereditary causes of difference and quarrel. Yet the Minister, who was my own immediate predecessor in the India Office—Sir Stafford Northcote—after a cordial and intelligent approval of Sir J. Lawrence's policy in respect to our relations with Afghanistan, replied on the 26th December, 1867, to the Government of India in a spirit of the utmost incredulity as to the existence of any danger from the advances of Russia: "Upon this point Her Majesty's Government see no reason for any uneasiness or for any jealousy. The conquests which Russia has made, and apparently is still making in Central Asia, appear to them to be the natural result of the circumstances in which she finds herself placed, and to afford no ground whatever for representations indicative of suspicion or alarm on the part of this

country. Friendly communications have at various times passed between the two Governments on the subject, and should an opportunity offer, Her Majesty's Government will avail themselves of it for the purpose of obviating any possible danger of misunderstanding, either with respect to the proceedings of Russia or to those of England. This is all that it appears necessary or desirable to do."* It will be seen that this confidence was expressed not only in view of the fact that Russia had made rapid advances in Central Asia, but also in the calmest contemplation of the probability that she was likely to make more. It was all in the natural course of things, and Her Majesty's Government had no anxieties on the subject.

In the meantime—on the 7th of October, 1867—the Ameer Ufzul Khan died at Cabul, and his brother Azam Khan was elected in his stead. This succession was at once acknowledged by the Government of India on the 13th of November, 1867.† It was followed, however, by an immediate renewal of the civil war, by a sudden revival of the cause of Shere Ali, and by a revolution which, in the course of nine months, restored him to his father's throne. On the 8th of September, 1868, he took triumphant possession of Cabul, and lost no time in announcing to the Viceroy of India his desire to con-

* Ibid., No. 12, pp. 24, 26. † Ibid., p. 24.

tinue the relations of amity and friendship which had been established between the two States.*

The Viceroy replied to this intimation on the 2nd of October, in a frank and friendly letter, expressing his sorrow that the family of his great father, Dost Mohammed, should have been broken up into contending factions, advising him to deal leniently with those who had opposed him, and assuring him that he was prepared not only to maintain the bonds of amity and goodwill which had been established with his father, but "so far as was practicable" to strengthen them.† In proof of this disposition Sir John Lawrence very soon after, in the same month of September, 1868, proceeded to assist Shere Ali with money to the extent of £60,000, as well as with a supply of arms. This assistance was so important at the time that Shere Ali publicly acknowledged at a later time that it materially contributed to the completion of his success and to the consolidation of his power.

It is curious that a little more than two months before this event, but at a time when the success of Shere Ali had become probable, Sir Henry Rawlinson had written an able and elaborate Memorandum, in which he endeavoured to arouse the languid interest and the slumbering alarms of the Secretary of State for India on the Central Asian Question. From his

* Ibid., No. 13, Inclos. 2, p. 43. † Ibid., Inclos. 3, p. 43.

well-known point of view, he urged the immediate importance which attached to the Russian victories in Bokhara, and the necessity of taking certain measures of precaution. Of these measures, the first was simply the immediate recognition and active support of Shere Ali, by subsidies and by the close association of British representation at Cabul; the second was the re-establishment of our lost influence at the Court of Persia; and the third was the completion of our Indian military lines of railway leading to the frontier. A fourth measure was indeed suggested, and that was the occupation of Quetta at the western end of the Bolan Pass. But the distinguished author of this Memorandum distinctly declared that unless this step could be taken with the cordial approval of the Ruler and Chiefs of Afghanistan, he was not prepared to recommend it, and considered that if the tribes in general regarded it as a menace, or as a preliminary to a farther hostile advance, we should not be justified for so small an object in risking the rupture of our friendly intercourse.*

This Memorandum, dated 20th July, seems to have been forwarded on 21st August, 1868, to the Government of India by Sir Stafford Northcote, the Secretary of State, unaccompanied by any expression of his own opinion, or of the opinion of her Majesty's

* Ibid., p. 41.

Government.* That opinion, therefore, so far as known to the Government of India, remained as it had been set forth in the despatch of December, 1867. This is very remarkable, because the Memorandum of Sir H. Rawlinson was full not only of what Russia had done, but of the alleged violation of promises which had been involved in doing it. It referred to the pacific Manifesto published by Prince Gortchakow in 1864, declaring that recent annexations had taken place against the will of the Government, and asserting with categorical precision that the expansion of the Empire had now reached its limit. It assumed—or without directly assuming, it implied—that these declarations or intimations of policy and of intention were "promises" in the sense of being engagements taken towards other Powers. It reminded the Government that the "ink had been hardly dry with which this Manifesto was written before its specific promises were completely stultified." It pointed out how hostilities had been almost immediately resumed in the valley of the Jaxartes; how Chemkend and Tashkend and Khojend had been captured in succession; how Romanofski had proceeded to invade Bokhara, and had established the Russian power within hail of Samarcand. All these proceedings were denounced in the Memorandum as "flagrant departures" from Prince Gortchakow's Manifesto, and as having been adopted under "various pretexts."† Nevertheless

* Ibid., p. 31, foot-note. † Ibid., pp. 31, 32.

under all this fire of warning, and a perfect tempest of prediction, the Cabinet of Mr. Disraeli gave no sign, —allowed their expressed confidence in Russia to remain on record as a dissent even from the guarded suggestions of Sir John Lawrence, and simply forwarded the Rawlinson Memorandum to form the subject of elaborate Minutes by the Viceroy and his Counsellors.

Sir H. Rawlinson, in a late edition of his work "England and Russia in the East," has indicated his impression that the action of Lord Lawrence in subsidising Shere Ali was due to the influence of his Memorandum, and he describes that action as one which "threw to the winds at once and for ever the famous policy of masterly inactivity."* The dates, however, do not favour this view, because the Memorandum was only sent from England on the 21st of August, and does not seem to have been under the consideration of the Government of India when Lord Lawrence determined to subsidise the Ameer. The truth is that Sir H. Rawlinson has always misconceived what the Lawrence policy was, and very naturally regards as departures from it, acts which were really in complete accordance with its fundamental object and intention. We have already seen that so early as 1867 Sir J. Lawrence had spoken of subsidising any Ruler at Cabul whom, for any reason,

* Chap. VI., p. 302.

it might be our interest to support. The aid he gave to Shere Ali in September, 1868, was in perfect consistency with the plan of helping any *de facto* Ruler, and of keeping ourselves free to judge according to circumstances, of the measure of success which sufficiently indicated possession of power, and the assent of the Afghan people. Sir J. Lawrence was not the man to lay down for himself any such wooden rules as have been ascribed to him by ignorant friends and zealous opponents.

Such was the position of the Central Asian Question in connexion with the declared policy of the British Government when the Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone came into power. In that Cabinet I had the honour of being Secretary of State for India, and was the organ of the Administration in Indian affairs during the whole of the Viceroyalty of Lord Mayo, and during two years of the Viceroyalty of Lord Northbrook. In Lord Mayo we had to deal with a new Viceroy who had been sent out by our predecessors in office, and who had actually left England to assume his government before we had ourselves received our appointments from the Queen. I had not therefore the advantage of having any personal communication whatever with Lord Mayo, or of ascertaining from him any one of his opinions on any Indian question, or of expressing to him any opinions of my own. I mention this not at all by way of complaint, for it was the result of peculiar and accidental circumstances ; but

for the purpose of explaining how it was that of necessity more than usual remained to be done by means of private letters. I call these letters private letters only to distinguish them from formal despatches, because they were not the letters of a private friend on the personal aspect of public questions. It so happens that I had never enjoyed the honour and advantage of Lord Mayo's acquaintance. Our communications, therefore, were essentially of an official character, although in a form which admitted of the more free handling of delicate affairs, sometimes containing passages which were confidential then, and must remain confidential still. Some of these letters are referred to in the despatches which have been lately published as essential parts of our official intercourse. The Viceroy's letters to me were very full, and as I soon found that our views were in complete accordance, I am able to present the following account of our policy, and of what was done in pursuance of it, drawn mainly from the circumstantial details given by himself.

And here I must begin by pointing out another of the innumerable inaccuracies of the London Narrative. It is one which concerns a very important point, and one which, as usual, has a direct connexion with the views which it was convenient for the Government to present. They have departed as I am about to show, from Lord Mayo's policy, quite as much as from the policy of Lord Lawrence. In order

to defend this departure it is their interest to make out that circumstances have greatly altered, and in particular, that Lord Mayo had not to deal with those "gigantic strides" of Russia which, it is implied, are of later date. I have already pointed out that there is no foundation whatever for this representation of the historical facts. Yet in the fourth paragraph* of the London Narrative this erroneous representation is made in the broadest terms. Referring to the period of Lord Lawrence's administration it says: "The outposts of Russia were then distant from the borders of Afghanistan." The fact, on the contrary, I believe to be, that the Russian outposts which are nearest to Afghanistan—namely, those which she acquired in the subjection of Bokhara—were then almost exactly where they are now. When Lord Mayo succeeded to the Viceroyalty of India, Russia had completed every one of those conquests which were most formidable as regarded the interests of India. During no previous period had her "steps" been more gigantic than during the four years from 1864 to 1869. In 1865 the Russians had taken Tashkend. In 1866 they had taken Khojend and had broken the power of the Khanat of Kokhand. In 1867 they had invaded Bokhara, and had established fortified positions far south of the Jaxartes. In the same year they had established the new Province of Turkistan, and had

* Afghan Corresp. I. 1878, No. 73, p. 261.

erected it into a separate Viceroyalty with Tashkend for its Capital. In 1868 they had taken Samarcand, and had established complete power over the Khanate of Bokhara.

This conquest, and the establishment of this power, virtually brought Russia into contact with Afghanistan. No later Russian movement in Central Asia is to be compared in importance with this movement which had been completed in 1869. Sir Henry Rawlinson was quite right when he pointed out in his Memorandum the peculiar significance of Russian domination in Bokhara. It meant Russian domination over a Government which marched with Afghanistan along the greater part of its northern frontier, and which had special relations with the people and Rulers of Cabul. What, then, are we to say of the accuracy of the London Narrative when (para. 7) it says, speaking of the early days of Lord Mayo's Government, "The advances of Russia in Central Asia had not, up to this period, assumed dimensions such as to cause uneasiness to the Indian Government?" No doubt there is an ambiguity in this phrase. It might be construed to mean that the Indian Government had not, as a matter of fact, felt uneasiness. Even this is not correct, as Sir J. Lawrence's Despatch of 1867 proves. But its real meaning evidently is that the advances of Russia had not then "assumed dimensions" sufficiently large to attract much attention, and that later advances have

wholly altered the position. The fact is that no later advances have been made by Russia comparable in importance to those which made her mistress of Bokhara and Kokhand. And another fact is that the Indian Government had its eyes wide awake to the significance of these events, and that Lord Mayo's policy was deliberately adopted in full contemplation of all the possible dangers they might involve. If the Government of India felt no serious alarm on account of these events it was because that Government consisted at that time of men with some nerve, and with some common sense.

It is a curious illustration of the historical accuracy as well as of the argumentative value of this 7th paragraph of the London Narrative, that the leading expeditionary columns which were directed in 1878 by Russia towards the frontiers of Afghanistan, moved from territories which had been either actually or virtually acquired in 1869, and that no military movement was found practicable from the Caspian base.*

Although the specific measures which were summarised in the last paragraph of the Rawlinson Memorandum were not in themselves of any very formidable kind, and although the first and most impor-

* One of the columns was to move from a point on the borders of Kokhand, and a small remnant of this once-powerful Khanate was allowed by Russia to remain nominally independent till 1876. But this remnant had been completely at the mercy of Russia since 1867.

tant of them,—the recognition and support of Shere Ali,—had actually been adopted by Sir J. Lawrence and his Government before or about the time of the arrival of the Memorandum in India; yet the general tone of the Memorandum, and the ulterior measures which it indicated for the future, led to its being closely criticised by the Government of India, and by many of the most able and experienced officers to whom it was referred by the Viceroy. The general result was summed up in a despatch, signed by Sir John Lawrence and his Council addressed to me, and dated the 4th of January, 1869. They were strongly adverse to any advance, beyond our own frontier, on political, on military, and on financial grounds. They declared for the policy of husbanding the resources of India, and not wasting them on costly and difficult expeditions, or in the maintenance of distant outposts. They objected to any active interference in the affairs of Afghanistan by the deputation of British officers, or to the occupation, whether forcible or amicable, of any post or tract in that country, as a measure sure to engender irritation, defiance, and hatred, in the minds of Afghans. On the other hand, they agreed with the Rawlinson Memorandum in desiring that greater attention in the interests of India should be paid to the strength and character of our Mission to Teheran. They announced that the Government of India had already conferred upon Shere Ali a subsidy of six lacs of rupees, and was pre-

pared to give him arms. They requested authority to repeat this kind and measure of support at the discretion of the Government of India. With regard to the advances of Russia in Central Asia, they repeated the recommendation that some clear understanding should be come to with the Court of St. Petersburg as to its projects and designs in those regions. They complained that this subject had been pressed on Sir Stafford Northcote without any result, except his despatch of December, 1867. And, finally, they advised that Russia should be told, in firm but courteous language, that she cannot be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan, or in those of any State which lies contiguous to our frontier.*

Such was the policy which Lord Mayo found the Government of India had declared to be its own when he assumed the functions of his great office. It was a policy distinct and definite both in its negative and affirmative aspect; both in the things which it proposed to do, and in the things which it resolutely refused to undertake. It was in pursuance of this policy that Lord Clarendon began those negotiations with the Cabinet of St. Petersburg which had for their object some understanding and agreement respecting the limits not only of our respective possessions in Asia, but also, beyond these, of our respective fields of predominant influence. It was in pursuance

* Ibid., No. 14, pp. 43-5.

of the same policy in its Indian branch that Lord Mayo had immediately to prepare for a personal meeting with the Ameer of Cabul, a meeting which had been suggested and sought by Shere Ali, and which Sir John Lawrence had recommended to the favourable consideration of his successor.

On the 26th January, 1869, Lord Mayo wrote to me the first letter in which he indicated his views in respect to our policy towards the Ameer. It is remarkable as indicating incidentally (1) that he recognised the utility of having a European official in Cabul, if this measure could properly be adopted; (2) that he did not consider the difficulties in the way of it as difficulties that would be necessarily permanent; and (3) that he was fully aware of the fact that, as matters then stood, it would be inexpedient to attempt it. On this subject his language was as follows:—"With the friendly feelings that Shere Ali entertains towards us in consequence of the assistance in money and arms that we have given him, we may, without sending at present any European official to Cabul, exercise sufficient influence over him to keep him on the most amicable terms with us." It is clear from this passage that Lord Mayo had this question fully before him, and that what he was about to determine in regard to it, was so determined on overruling considerations of policy or of good faith.

On the 30th of January, 1869, a letter was addressed to the Viceroy by Sir Donald Macleod, Lieut.-Governor

of the Punjaub, informing him that the defeat of Azim Khan, and of his nephew Abdul Raman Khan, had terminated the civil war in Afghanistan, but that the portion of country north of the Hindoo Koosh, commonly called Afghan Turkistan, remained but imperfectly subject to the Ameer Shere Ali. Macleod added that "this district was likely ere long to become the area of intrigue on the part of the Russians, whose high officials avowed that their projects comprised the whole country up to the Hindoo Koosh." He further informed the Viceroy that the Ameer was most anxious to arrange an interview, and that he was so set upon it that, in all probability, if it were necessary, Shere Ali would even be prepared to undertake a journey to Calcutta.

This communication was forwarded to me by Lord Mayo in a letter, dated the 7th of February, in which he informed me that he expected to be able to arrange for the desired interview, and that, if it were prudently conducted, he anticipated great good as its result. In particular, he explained that he anticipated that a considerable effect would be produced "throughout all Central Asia."

This letter, added to the facts which have been already narrated, puts a final extinguisher on the plea which has been already dealt with on a previous page, that Lord Mayo's policy is out of date because it was before the advances of Russia in Central Asia had become serious, or had attracted

the attention they deserved. The recent establishment of Russian influence in Bokhara, on the very borders of Afghanistan, the Memorandum of Sir H. Rawlinson, and the discussions in India to which it had given rise, the alarming intimation freshly conveyed by Sir D. Macleod that Russian high officials were claiming Afghan Turkistan as one of their legitimate fields of operation, and Lord Mayo's own explanation above given of the importance he attached to his coming interview with the Ameer—all prove conclusively that the Central Asian Question in its most urgent aspects was fully before Lord Mayo in 1869, and that the policy he pursued was the policy which he considered the wisest and the best in full view of all the contingencies of a close Russian approach to the borders of India.

Nor is this all: the same letter of the 7th of February shows that Lord Mayo was exposed to all those influences of an excited atmosphere of opinion which, under such circumstances, are apt not only to disturb the judgment, but to pervert the moral sense. In that letter, Lord Mayo informed me that the Press of India was teeming with articles representing Shere Ali as "completely in the hands of Russia and of Persia." Reports and assertions of this kind, the offspring of Barracks and of Bazaars, are never wanting. They have very often a tremendous effect upon nervous politicians, inspiring them with silly fears and incurable suspicions. Let

it then be clearly understood what were the circumstances under which Lord Mayo went into the Umballa Conference, and in the full contemplation of which he deliberately shaped his course. He knew all the dangers—when he determined not to bully. He knew all the suspicions—when he determined to be himself perfectly truthful and sincere. He knew all the fresh advances which Russia had been making, and the farther advances she had still to make—when he resolved to keep with absolute good faith all the promises, whether verbal or written, which had been given by those who had preceded him in the great office of Viceroy of India.

On the 2nd, and again on the 8th of March, Lord Mayo addressed to me farther communications on the approaching Conference, which had then been arranged for the 25th of that month. In the first of these he repeated an expression of the importance he attached to it, not only as likely to have the most beneficial effect on public opinion in Central Asia, Persia, and Hindostan, but also as likely to lead to some definite arrangement with the Ameer. The nature of that arrangement he explained to be, that we should assist him to form a strong and durable Government, whilst he, on the other hand, was to give facilities to our trade, and to maintain order on those portions of our frontier over which he had any influence. Lord Mayo, however, declared himself to be entirely opposed to any attempt being made "to

take any direct part in the internal affairs of Afghanistan." In the second letter, the Viceroy specified, further, as one of the objects he had in view, "the obtaining of accurate information as to the events that occur in Central Asia." So that this aspect also of the value to be attached to the presence of British officers in Cabul, was fully in the Viceroy's mind before he went to the Umballa Conference.

Two days later, on the 10th of March, Lord Mayo wrote to me another letter on the same subject, entering more fully into an explanation of his views: "With regard to the approaching interview with the Ameer, my intention is to avoid any engagements of a permanent character. I am opposed to Treaties and subsidies. Sir J. Lawrence gave him 60,000*l.*, and had engaged to give him 60,000*l.* more. This probably placed him on the throne, as it enabled him to pay his army, which his rival could not do, and he is, I am told, very grateful. . . . . I believe his visit will do much good. It will show him that we have no other wish than to see a strong Government in Afghanistan, where we have no thought of interfering with him in any way. We want no resident at Cabul, or political influence in his kingdom." Here we see coming, link by link, more distinctly into view, that chain of evidence which connects the subsequent transactions of the Conference with Lord Mayo's knowledge of the promises and engagements which would be most valuable to the Ameer. We have

seen him indicating how well he knew that British residents would be useful if they were acceptable to the Ruler and people of Cabul. We see him now indicating his perfect knowledge that those favourable conditions did not exist, and that one of the great advantages to be derived from the approaching Conference would be the opportunity it would afford the Viceroy of satisfying the Ameer that we did not want to press any residents upon him.

But further evidence is not wanting, even during the few days which yet remained before the Conference. In every letter I received which was written by Lord Mayo about this time, further links in the same chain of evidence are supplied. On the very day on which he left Calcutta, and, as he told me, just as he was about to step into the train, he addressed to me a letter, in which it might almost seem that he spoke as a prophet on the sad transactions of recent years. After assuring me of his entire agreement with the opinions I had expressed to him on the policy to be pursued towards Afghanistan, he proceeded thus :—"I see that there is to be a Central Asiatic debate in the House of Commons. I hope that sensible men will not advocate the extreme lines of absolute inaction, and the worse alternative of meddling and interfering by subsidies and emissaries. The safe course lies in watchfulness, and friendly intercourse with neighbouring States and Tribes."

At last, in the early morning of the 27th of March,

the Viceroy of India rode into Umballa, where the Ameer had already arrived two days before. Every pains had been taken to give to the meeting something more even than the usual pomp and state of an Indian Durbar. As an important part—or, at least, as an important indication—of the policy to be pursued, Lord Mayo endeavoured, in all matters of reception and ceremonial, to give the visit the character of a meeting between equals, and to show to the world that we looked on the Ameer as an independent, and not as a feudatory Prince. With this view former precedents were so far departed from as to show that an occurrence of a precisely similar kind never took place before in India. At first the old Sikh chiefs of the Punjaub, who detest an Afghan, were disposed to be jealous of these proceedings. But when it was explained to them that the Viceroy expected them to aid him in welcoming to their country a distinguished guest, they entered heartily into the position in which they were placed.

When the Conference began it was Lord Mayo's first object to find out what it was that the Ameer really expected and desired. After the dignified reserve which seldom deserts an Oriental had been somewhat overcome, the Viceroy found no difficulty in understanding the feelings of Shere Ali. He gave expression to them at last with much vehemence. They were perfectly natural feelings; and looking at the facts from his point of view, it is

impossible not to regard them with much sympathy. His fundamental grievance was the "one-sided" character of the Treaty of 1855. The terms of this Treaty have already been explained. They were extremely unequal as regards the obligations imposed on the two contracting parties. The Indian Government promised nothing except to respect the territories of Afghanistan, and never to interfere therein. But the corresponding obligation on the Ameer was very different. He promised to be "the friend of the friends, and the enemy of the enemies, of the Honorable East India Company." Thus, on the part of the Ameer, it was a Treaty of Alliance, offensive and defensive. On the part of the Indian Government it had no such character.

Accordingly, the moment Shere Ali opened his mouth at Umballa, this inequality was the burden of his song. He complained that our friendship with his father had been a "dry friendship," and "one-sided." We had not helped Shere Ali himself, as we ought to have done, to secure the throne. We had simply acknowledged him when, by his own good sword, he had secured it, or at least had very nearly secured it, for himself. We had equally recognised others when they had gained temporary success. What he now wanted was that we should guarantee, not himself only, but his lineal descendants, on the throne which he had won. He could not be content with our system of recognising any *de facto*

Ruler. But if the British Government would recognise himself and his dynasty as the *de jure* Sovereigns of Afghanistan, then he would be our friend indeed. For this purpose, what he desired was, that we should accept the same obligation as that which the Treaty of 1855 had imposed upon his father. We must make with him a Treaty offensive and defensive. His enemies must be our enemies, and his friends must be our friends. He required, also, that we should give him a fixed subsidy, in the form of an annual payment.

Lord Mayo refused all these demands. He intimated to the Ameer that they were altogether inadmissible. They would have bound us to support the Ameer against internal insurrection, however much rebellion may have been justified by his own misgovernment. They would have bound us to support his own nomination of a successor, however unjust his selection might be, and however obnoxious to his people. But this result, which was most objectionable to us, was precisely what Shere Ali most desired. It was not against external attack that he was really anxious to secure from Lord Mayo a binding guarantee. He and his Minister fought his case with pertinacity, and always with one great end in view—a British guarantee for himself and for his family, as the rightful rulers of Afghanistan. Foreign aggression was hardly present to his mind at all. "It is most remarkable," said Lord Mayo in his

private letter to me, giving an account of the Umballa Conference, "that during all the Ameer's conversations here, he has hardly ever mentioned the name of Russia. Whether it is that he is so wrapped up in his own affairs, or knows little of their proceedings, he does not give them a thought, and when we have casually referred to them, he generally says that we shall not hear much of them in Afghanistan for a long time."

It is needless to say that the offensive and defensive Treaty which he desired would have been equally open to objection in its relation to foreign affairs. It would have placed the resources of India unreservedly and unconditionally at the disposal of Shere Ali. He would have been far more than the Foreign Minister for England in the politics of the frontier. In either point of view it was impossible to give him what he asked, and the only course left open to Lord Mayo was to offer him everything which it was safe to give.

Accordingly, in the letter which the Ameer finally accepted from Lord Mayo as the utmost in the direction of his wishes which could be conceded to him, the phraseology is such as to have little or no special reference to the case of external attack. "Although, as already intimated to you, the British Government does not desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, yet considering that the bonds of friendship between that Government and your Highness have lately been more closely drawn than heretofore,

will view with severe displeasure any attempt to disturb your position as Ruler of Cabul, and rekindle civil war; and it will further endeavour from time to time to strengthen the government of your Highness to enable you to exercise with equity and justice your rightful rule, and to transmit to your descendants all the dignities and honours of which you are the lawful possessor."*

It will be seen that this sentence "sailed very near the wind." It caused some uneasiness at first to the Government at home lest it should have led the Ameer to suppose that he had actually got the guarantee which he desired. But Lord Mayo's ample explanations set this anxiety at rest, and I had the satisfaction of conveying to the Viceroy in a despatch dated the 27th August, 1869,† the full approbation of her Majesty's Government of the course which, under very difficult circumstances, he had taken. Lord Mayo had carefully and repeatedly explained to the Ameer that "under no circumstances was he to expect that British troops would cross the frontier to put down civil war or domestic contention."

General assurances were given to Shere Ali that from time to time we should give him such assistance and support as the circumstances of the case might seem in our judgment to justify or require. As an

* Ibid., No. 17, Inclos. 3, p. 90.
† Ibid., No. 20, p. 100.

earnest of our friendly intentions in this matter a considerable sum of money, and a further supply of arms, were given to him.

It may well be asked if this was enough to satisfy the Ameer as a substitute for all the demands he had made—for the treaty offensive and defensive, for the guarantee against domestic enemies, for the assurance of his succession, for the annual subsidy. No; there was one more concession which Lord Mayo made, and made willingly—he promised to the Ameer "that no European officers should be placed as Residents in his cities."

It has been since contended on the evidence of Captain Grey, who acted as the Viceroy's interpreter at the Umballa Conference, that in the course of that Conference "the Ameer did freely consent to the appointment of European British officers in Balkh, Herat, or anywhere but actually in Cabul."* Even if there were no evidence against the accuracy of this impression on the mind of Captain Grey,—even if it were strictly and undeniably accurate,—it could have no bearing on the question of our obligations to the Ameer. That which alone is binding on the parties to such a Conference is the conclusion arrived at. It must happen in every negotiation that suggestions and proposals are made on both sides which are set aside in the course of the discussion. The utmost use that can be

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 12, p. 144.

made of such suggestions, even when all the circumstances and conditions under which they are made are correctly recollected and reported, is to throw light on the processes of elimination by which the final results were reached. The fact of any particular suggestion having been made, coupled with the fact that it was not adopted, but, on the contrary, was thrown aside, can have no other effect than to prove that the rejection of it did not arise from accident, but from a deliberate decision.

So far, therefore, very little importance attaches to Captain Grey's impression that at one moment during the Conferences, and probably on conditions which were never granted, the Ameer evinced a willingness to admit European officers as Residents in his dominions. It so happens, however, that there is the strongest, and, indeed, conclusive evidence, that Captain Grey must have misconstrued the language of the Ameer.

In the first place, it is not borne out by the only documents upon which he himself relies. These documents are (1) a Note submitted by himself to Lord Mayo, reporting certain conversations held on the 29th of March with Noor Mohammed, the confidential Minister of the Ameer, and (2) a relative passage in his own private memoranda. Now, on turning to the words of that Note, we find that the reported conversation had reference to the supposed case of Russian aggression against the Northern frontier of Afghanistan. The Minister is said

to have expressed doubts of any Russian power of aggression for years to come, but still thought precautions should be taken. He is then reported to have said that he would construct forts on his own part or under British superintendence, and admit European garrisons, "if ever desired;" and further, that he "would be glad to see an Agent or Engineer Superintendent in Balkh, Herat, or anywhere but actually in Cabul." These words, even if reported with perfect accuracy not only in themselves, but in their connexion, do not at all justify the construction put upon them by Captain Grey. That the Ameer should have been willing to admit English garrisons into his forts in the event of a Russian attack upon his frontiers, is probable enough, and all the more probable from the fact that Noor Mohammed evidently regarded such a danger as not a very near contingency. But this has nothing whatever to do with the proposal to station European officers as permanent Political Agents in his dominions. Neither have the succeeding words quoted from the Note, any reference to this proposal. He was willing to see "an Agent" or "Engineer Superintendent" in Balkh, or anywhere else except in Cabul. The Ameer never objected to British "Agents" anywhere, so long as they were not Europeans, and this passage of the Note does not specify the nationality of the Agent. But even if this passage did distinctly refer to an European, it probably referred to one who should be in charge of the fortifications previously referred to, and this connexion of ideas is still more

plainly indicated by the alternative expression which is used, "or Engineer Superintendent."

As regards the second document relied upon by Captain Grey—viz., his own private memoranda, the passage he quotes is still more insufficient for the heavy superstructure he builds upon it. Indeed such evidence as it affords seems to me to point strongly the other way. The Ameer was asked to "accede to our deputation of Native Agents wherever we pleased"—a demand, on our part, plainly indicating how well we knew his objections to European Agents. The Ameer is then said to have been asked if he would be "agreeable to the deputation of an Envoy at some future date." This question is obviously of the vaguest kind, and it was clearly impossible for the Ameer to say that never at any future time, or under any possible circumstances, could he receive an Envoy. But the reception of an Envoy does not necessarily mean the reception of a permanent resident Envoy. On the contrary, the wording of the question rather implies a special Embassy. "At some future date" is hardly the expression that would be used to describe the establishment of a permanent Mission. Yet even to this very vague question Captain Grey reports a very cautious answer:—"The Ameer expressed his willingness to receive an Envoy as soon as things had somewhat settled down, anywhere except at Cabul, where he thought it would affect his power with the people."

It appears, then, that even in the entire absence of

any extraneous evidence against the assertion of Captain Grey, it is one which is not justified by the only documentary witness which he can summon in support of it.

But we have abundant other evidence in refutation of Captain Grey's interpretation of the facts. Mr. Seton Karr, who held the high office of Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, and who filled it for many years with acknowledged ability, was present during the whole of the Umballa Conferences, and has declared that neither the Ameer nor his Minister ever expressed any willingness to receive British officers as residents in his Kingdom. If this evidence stood alone it would be quite enough. On a question of such capital importance, which was the subject of Treaty stipulations of subsisting force—a question, as I have shown, on which the mind of the Viceroy had been specially dwelling for several weeks up to the moment of the Conference—it is not possible that such a communication can have been made either by the Ameer or by his Minister without attracting the attention of the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

But this is not all. On the 4th of April, before Lord Mayo had left Umballa, and when every minutest feature of the Conferences was still fresh in his recollection, he addressed to me a very long and very minute account of every important circumstance connected with his own communications to the Ameer,

and of the Ameer's communications to him. In particular, he gave a detailed narrative of what passed at the Conference on the 29th of March—the very day to which Captain Grey's note refers. There is not a word in that account to indicate that the Ameer or his Minister made any such intimation as that to which Captain Grey refers. It was at this interview that the Ameer insisted not only with vehemence, but with great excitement, on the one object which he had most at heart, namely, that of an absolute dynastic guarantee from the British Government in favour of himself and his heirs of blood. To obtain this it is possible that he might have consented, or might have proposed to consent, to very hard terms. But the very hardest of those terms would have been the admission of resident British officers in his dominions. Lord Mayo was determined not to give him a dynastic guarantee, and he was equally determined not to press upon him a demand which would have been in violation of a subsisting engagement, and which the Viceroy had apparently come to regard as likely to be really injurious, under existing circumstances, to the authority of the Ameer. It was in this spirit that he assured Shere Ali that whilst the British Government desired to support him, and had already done so in a most effective way, it did not desire that this support should be manifested in a form which might suggest the idea of his "being maintained mainly by extraneous aid." And so, having felt himself

obliged by imperative considerations of public policy to decline giving to the Ameer that on which he had set his heart, the Viceroy wisely determined to give him every compensation in his power, and instead of pressing on him the acception of European officers, he promised him, on the contrary, that no such demand would be made at all.

The extreme jealousy of the Ameer and of his Minister on the subject of European Agents of the British Government was strongly shown at the Conferences which were held on the 1st and on the 3rd of April, of which notes were appended to Lord Mayo's letter to me of the 4th. One of the questions asked on the 1st was, "Would the Ameer sanction native Agents in Afghanistan, either as visitors or as permanent residents, supposing the British Government wished it?" Even on this question Noor Mohammed did not wish to commit himself, and showed the suspicion and the fear which was deeply rooted in the mind of every Afghan, by "asking, rather anxiously, whether European Agents were intended?" Before the close of the day's proceedings the Foreign Secretary assured the Minister that he "had reserved nothing, and had nothing to reserve."

The Viceroy continued his correspondence with me on the subject of the Conferences for several weeks after he left Umballa. One of his letters, which was written on the 18th of April, is remarkable, as that which contained the summary of the results arrived

at in the Umballa Conferences, which is quoted in the public Despatch dated July 1, 1869.* The summary arranges those results on the principle which has been explained in the Preface of this work,—that, namely, of giving a separate list, first of the proposals which had been negatived, and next, of the proposals which had been affirmed. Among the proposals which had been negatived were those of sending into Afghanistan either troops, or officers, or Residents. Troops the Ameer might sometimes have liked to get—provided they were to be entirely at his own disposal. Officers also he might sometimes have desired to get—provided they were to be nothing more than his drill-sergeants, and to retire when he ceased to need them. "Residents," that is to say, officers resident in his country as Political Agents were, above all things, his dread and his abhorrence. But as he was not to have the things which he might have accepted as a boon, so neither was he to have thrust upon him a burden which he disliked. All those proposals, therefore, some for one reason, some for another reason, were equally negatived.

But this letter of the 18th of April is further remarkable as containing expressions of opinion which throw an important light on the reasons for Lord Mayo's silence with the Ameer regarding causes of anxiety which, nevertheless, he had

* Ibid., No. 19, p. 95, parag. 22.

full in view. In that letter he expressed it as his opinion (in which I did then and do now entirely agree) that our policy towards Afghanistan "ought to be the basis of our Central Asian policy." But one of the most essential parts of that policy, in the Viceroy's opinion, was not to feel and not to exhibit nervous anxiety and unreasonable fears. In his letter to me of the 4th of April Lord Mayo had, as we have seen, explained to me that the Ameer hardly ever mentioned Russia at all. Under these circumstances it was the Viceroy's wise policy not to exhibit ourselves in the light in which too many English and Indian politicians are never weary of exhibiting themselves to the world. They are perpetually assuring us that they do not dread the actual invasion of India by Russia, but that they do dread the disturbance and unsettlement of mind which the advances of that Power will occasion in the minds of the Indian Princes and people. But it is plain that this evil, whatever it may amount to, is aggravated by nothing so much as exhibitions of alarm on the part of the English Government. Lord Mayo was determined that no such apprehensions should be exhibited by himself. In this same letter he said upon this subject, "Sanguine politicians at home will be disappointed that what is termed the Central Asian question did not prominently appear at Umballa. I am sure you will agree with me that it was a great blessing it did not. I certainly determined not to broach it, because I am

of opinion that it is most desirable to show the Ameer that we have no apprehensions from the North. He, on the other hand, is so intent on establishing himself on the throne of Cabul, that he appears to think very little at present of either Russia or Persia."

The result was in one respect most important with respect to the whole scope and effect of the engagements made at Umballa. It dissociated those engagements entirely from the contingency of foreign aggression on Afghanistan. We have seen that Sir J. Lawrence, when Shere Ali was reported to be acting in alliance with Persia, at once intimated to the Government at home that his policy of abstention would not apply to such a case. In like manner Lord Mayo pointed out to me that, "as the question of the invasion by a foreign European Power of his territory was never alluded to by the Ameer or by me, our course of action in the event of such an occurrence taking place is not affected by anything that took place at Umballa."

I now come to one of the most important of this series of letters, dated June 3rd, 1869. It was written by the Viceroy expressly to explain various misapprehensions which he found had arisen respecting what he had said and done at the Umballa Conferences, and was, indeed, intended to anticipate, among others, those misconceptions which led to my Despatch of the 14th of May.* In fact this Despatch and Lord

* Ibid., No. 18, p. 91.

Mayo's letter of June 3rd crossed each other. In this letter he says emphatically, "The only pledges (to the Ameer) given were: that we would not interfere in his affairs; that we would support his independence; that we would not force European officers or Residents upon him against his wish." There is no ambiguity here. We have here Lord Mayo's distinct declaration that at Umballa he did renew and repeat that "pledge" to the Ameer which had been embodied in the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857 with his father. It was a pledge which he and his family had always valued almost above all others, and the fulfilment of which was doubly due to him now when Lord Mayo had felt himself compelled to refuse so much that he had eagerly desired. This letter of June 3rd places beyond all doubt Lord Mayo's estimate of the binding character of those promises which he had given to the Ameer, and of the rank and place among those promises which had been assigned to the engagement on the subject of the residence of European officers in Cabul.

And now having concluded my account of the Umballa Conferences, taken from the most authentic of all sources, I must express my opinion, as the Secretary of State under whom the sanction and approval of the Crown was given to Lord Mayo's conduct, as to the binding character of the promises which were given by that Viceroy. Sir James Stephen, in a letter lately communicated to the *Times*, has put forward

the doctrine that in our relations with semi-barbarous States like that of Afghanistan, we are not bound by the somewhat technical and elaborate code of rules which go by the name of International Law, and which are recognised as binding between the more civilised nations of the world. In this general proposition I agree. I have too sincere a respect for the high character as well as for the great abilities of Sir James Stephen to suppose that in laying down this proposition he intended to defend, or even to palliate any departure from the strictest good faith with such nations where engagements, direct or indirect, have been made with them. I am sure he cannot have intended to "use this liberty as a cloak of licentiousness." The truth is, Sir James Stephen's doctrine—in the only sense in which I agree in it, and in the only sense in which, as I believe, he ever can have intended to propound it—is a doctrine which leaves us free to apply to all engagements with half-civilised Governments, even a higher standard of honour than is usually applied to international dealings between equal States. For example, there are technical distinctions, well known and recognised among them, which establish different degrees of obligation as attaching to different forms of diplomatic documents. It would be dishonourable, in my opinion, and dishonourable in the highest degree, to take advantage of any such distinctions, in cases where they cannot be equally known and equally

recognised by both parties. If the pledged word of a Viceroy of India is not to be held as good and as binding as any Treaty, there is an end of our claim to confidence in the East. We ought not to tolerate the smallest trifling with this absolute demand upon us. We have only to look at the 54th paragraph of Lord Mayo's public despatch on the Umballa Conference;* to see what a high place must be given in the Court of Honour to the pledges which he gave to the Ameer. He says, he thought it undesirable to engage in voluminous written communications with the Ameer, because "the visit was one of a personal character, conceived in the spirit of amity and good faith."

The pledges given at the Umballa Conference are all the more binding on us from the effect which they actually produced. Except these pledges, there was nothing to account for the good humour with which Shere Ali returned to his Kingdom from his conference with the Viceroy. Beyond the repetition of some immediate assistance in money and in arms, and beyond the promise not to embarrass him with the presence of European Agents, we had given him nothing that he desired to have. Behind these promises, indeed, there remained the personal influence of Lord Mayo. His manly presence, his genial open-hearted countenance, and his transparent sincerity of character—these had produced a great effect, even on an angry and suspicious Asiatic.

* Ibid., No. 18, p. 98.

It would, however, be a very great mistake to suppose that the Ameer was ever really satisfied ; or that, if he was so for a moment, his discontent did not soon return. The unhappy relations which he speedily established with the ablest and most powerful of his sons, and the usual influence of the harem which induced him to desire the succession of a later child—these things kept constantly before him the dangers of intestine strife, and the prospect of a disputed throne. An Afghan does not readily abandon any purpose, and the steady refusal of the British Government to pledge itself to one party or another in the family feuds of Afghanistan, while every day that refusal became more and more clearly necessary as well as just, became also more and more a practical grievance to the Ameer.

Shere Ali had brought with him to Umballa the boy Abdoolah Jan, and this young prince had, at all the Durbars, sat on the left hand of the Ameer, whilst the Viceroy sat upon the right.* This position seemed to point to the acknowledgment, by the Ameer at least, of Abdoolah Jan as his heir-apparent. But no nomination of his successor had as yet been formally announced by the Ameer. It is now evident that this was the very matter which made Shere Ali so bent on obtaining a dynastic guarantee, and it is probable that if this guarantee

* Ibid., No. 17, Inclos. 2, p. 90.

had been given, Abdoolah would have been at once proclaimed the successor of the Ameer. In this event, and in the event of the death of Shere Ali, the British Government would have been committed to the support of Abdoolah in the civil war, which would have been immediately raised by Yakoob Khan. But failing in his demand for a dynastic guarantee, Shere Ali seems to have hesitated to avow his intentions. During one of the Conferences at Umballa, Lord Mayo did make inquiries of the Ameer upon the subject, and intimated that it was a question on which the British Government could not but feel a friendly interest. The Ameer, however, parried the inquiry, and said that his determination in that matter when it was come to, would be communicated from Cabul.

The progress of events soon showed the danger attaching to such guarantees as that which Shere Ali had desired. In 1870, Yakoob Khan raised the standard of rebellion; and in June, 1871, had made himself master of Herat. In the same month Lord Mayo heard that Yakoob had made advances to his father for a reconciliation, and he determined to take the very delicate step of writing to the Ameer, advising him to come to terms with his son. This accordingly he did. The letter of the Viceroy reached our native Agent at Cabul on the 16th of June, and was immediately communicated to the Ameer. The advice of Lord Mayo probably corresponded

at that moment with the Ameer's own estimate of the wisest policy to be pursued towards his powerful and successful son. He therefore immediately addressed a letter to Yakoob Khan in the sense of Lord Mayo's advice, and assured Yakoob that if he came to express repentance, and make his submission at Cabul, he would be forgiven and received. The result was that Yakoob came to Cabul, and that his father deemed it expedient to send him back to Herat, with the appointment of Governor of that important City and Province. This result gave much satisfaction to the Viceroy, and it was indeed a very remarkable proof of the influence which he had acquired over the mind of Shere Ali by the pursuance of a perfectly open and friendly policy.

It is, however, a signal illustration of Lord Mayo's excellent judgment and good sense that the success, or apparent success, of this friendly intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan did not for a moment shake his former views as to the serious danger and impolicy of anything approaching to formal engagements with the Ameer in relation to such affairs. On the contrary, the whole transaction confirmed him in those views, because they brought out in a vivid light the essential instability of Shere Ali's throne, and the still greater instability of any predetermined order of succession. Accordingly, on the 7th of July, before Lord Mayo had, as yet, heard of the final result, but when he knew that his letter

had been successful, and that Yakoob was then on his way to Cabul, he addressed to me a letter in which he reiterated, in the strongest language, his confidence in the policy which had been pursued by Sir J. Lawrence and himself, in opposition to the policy which recommended more active interference. "It is impossible," he said, "to express in too strong terms how entirely I disapprove of the policy of interfering in the family quarrels of the Barukzyes." He proceeds to illustrate this opinion by illustrations in detail, which it is unnecessary to quote, because they contain allusions and references to persons which are among the very few passages of a really private character which occur in our correspondence on the subject. Suffice it to say that Lord Mayo indicated his opinion that Yakoob Khan would probably be the future Ruler of Cabul, and that it would be most unfortunate if we were ever again to be in the position of maintaining on the throne of Cabul a "hated Sovereign."

Meanwhile, however, the immediate effects of the Umballa Conference were such as to keep Shere Ali in good humour. The measure of assistance which had been given to the Ameer, first by Sir J. Lawrence and then by Lord Mayo, both in the moral effect produced by the support of the British Government, and by the actual funds put at his disposal, had enabled Shere Ali to establish his authority over the whole of Afghanistan, and of the country called Afghan Turkestan, lying between the Hindoo Koosh and the

Oxus. So soon after the Umballa Conference as the 1st of May, 1869, Colonel Pollock, the Commissioner of Peshawur, had reported as the direct and immediate result of the Umballa meeting, that the Ameer had been able to recover Balkh without a struggle, and had secured the submission of Badakshan.

Whilst the opinions and policy of the Government on the Central Asian question were thus being carried into execution in India, through the Viceroy, with a dignity of conduct and a steadiness of judgment which left us nothing to desire, the same opinions and the same policy were being prosecuted at home through the Foreign Office. During the same weeks in which Lord Mayo was preparing to receive Shere Ali at Umballa, Lord Clarendon was in communication with the Russian Ambassador in London, intimating the desire of the Cabinet to arrive at some understanding with the Government of Russia on the questions which might be raised by the rapid advances of the Russian Empire in Central Asia. In these communications with Baron Brünow, Lord Clarendon explained that the main object of such an understanding was to pacify the public mind both in England and in Asia. So far as the Government was concerned, we felt that "we were strong enough in India to repel all aggression." We made no complaint, and we repudiated any feeling of alarm. On the other hand, we expressed no such implicit confidence as had been expressed by Sir

Stafford Northcote. On the contrary, we pointed out that the progress of Russia in Central Asia was, like our own progress in Hindostan, the effect of tendencies and of causes which were more or less in constant operation, and that certain results would naturally and almost necessarily follow from them which it would be wise on the part of both Governments to foresee and to prevent. In indicating what those results were, we did not pretend to any right or to any desire of stopping Russia in her career of conquest over the desert wastes and the robber tribes of Central Asia. We did not hint that a large portion of the world was to be kept in a state of hopeless barbarism, to save us from having nervous fears. We specified and limited the demands which we thought we had a fair right to make,—and these were that measures should be taken to prevent any aspiring Russian general from intriguing with malcontent Indian Princes, or disturbing the States and populations which touch our frontiers. For this purpose, moreover, a definite arrangement was suggested, and that was, that "some territory should be recognised as neutral between the possessions of England and of Russia in the East, which should be the limit of those possessions, and should be scrupulously respected by both Powers." Baron Brünow concurred with Lord Clarendon in the suggestion. He made a report of it to his Government, and on the very day on which Lord Mayo was receiving Shere Ali at Umballa he brought

to the Foreign Office a letter from Prince Gortchakow, specifying Afghanistan as a territory and a State well fitted to occupy the position which was indicated in Lord Clarendon's suggestion. He was therefore authorised to give a "positive assurance that Afghanistan would be considered as entirely beyond the sphere in which Russia might be called upon to exercise her influence."*

It is of great importance to look closely at the language of the letter from Prince Gortchakow to Baron Brünow, dated on the 7th and which Lord Clarendon received on the 27th of March. That language was quite distinct that the object in view was to be that of keeping "a zone between the possessions of the two Empires in Asia, to preserve them from any contact." It is clear, therefore, that whatever territory might be fixed upon by the two Governments as constituting this zone, it was contemplated that the actual possessions of Russia and of England might come to touch it on opposite sides. But Russia was as yet very far from actually touching any part of the Afghan frontier. Bokhara touched it, if Afghanistan was fully understood to extend to the Oxus. And Bokhara was now under the command of Russia. But if Afghanistan were not understood as extending to the Oxus on its northern frontier, then the acceptance of that country and

* Central Asia, II., 1873, No. 1, p. 1.

Kingdom as constituting the proposed zone would leave room for a large advance on the part of Russia, to the south of her then acknowledged frontier, and might thus possibly be held to sanction her absorption of the whole territory between Bokhara and the Hindoo Koosh. Lord Clarendon, therefore, with very proper caution, in thanking the Russian Government for the spirit of their communication, and in expressing general agreement in the principle of the proposal, reserved his acceptance of Afghanistan as the territory to be selected, upon the ground that "he was not sufficiently informed on the subject to express an opinion as to whether Afghanistan should fulfil the conditions of circumstances of a neutral territory between the two Powers, such as it seemed desirable to establish."*

It was of course at this time my duty to inform Lord Clarendon upon those political and geographical facts which were of importance to the question then under discussion, and which were only known, or best known, to the Government of India and its officers. I was at that very time receiving communications from Lord Mayo which, as I have already explained, represented Russian officials as holding very suspicious language on the subject of the limits of the Afghan Kingdom.† These reports might not be correct. But,

* Ibid., No. 1, Inclos., p. 3.
† See ante, pp. 257, 258.

on the other hand, they might be true; and at all events, they suggested caution and inspired serious doubt whether it would be safe to accept Afghanistan as fulfilling the required conditions, unless it were clearly understood by both Governments what were the territories included under that name. Accordingly, after hearing all that could be ascertained from our Indian experts as to the somewhat obscure geography of the northern frontier of Shere Ali's dominions, I came to the conclusion that it would be unsafe and inexpedient to accept Afghanistan as the farthest limit of Russian advances, unless it were at the same time admitted as a fact that Afghanistan extended to the Upper Oxus. It appeared to us farther that it would be best to take that great river as the boundary of the "zone" for some distance even beyond the point where it ceased to touch the Afghan dominions. The effect of this would have been to include in the territory which was to be intermediate between the possessions of England and of Russia, not only the whole of Shere Ali's dominions, but also a large tract of country, for the most part desert, which was laid down in the maps as belonging to the Khan of Khiva.

Accordingly, these proposals were communicated to Baron Brünow by Lord Clarendon on the 17th of April, 1869, and it was specially explained that they were founded on "the decided opinion of the Secretary of State for India," after consultation with

those members of Council who were best acquainted with the country.*

This proposal at once compelled the Government of Russia to show its cards: and on the 2nd of June Prince Gortchakow avowed that very opinion of which the Indian Government had been suspicious, namely, that Afghanistan did not reach the Oxus, and that, on the contrary, the territory of Bokhara extended to the south of that river.†

In the discussions which followed, the last of our two proposals came to be abandoned. That proposal, namely, the extension of the proposed "zone" beyond the Afghan Kingdom to some point farther westward upon the Oxus as yet undefined, was a proposal which was completely overshadowed by the paramount importance of a clear and definite understanding as to the extent of territory which was included in Afghanistan. The discussions on this subject were protracted during the long period of three years and a half. The discussion was conducted in a most friendly spirit, generally of course through the Foreign Office, but at one time also, in a subordinate degree, through an officer of the Indian Government, Mr. Douglas Forsyth. He visited St. Petersburg in October, 1869, furnished with instructions and private letters from Lord Mayo, in which full explanations were

* Central Asia, II., 1873, No. 3, p. 4. † Ibid., No. 7, p. 6.

given to the Russian Cabinet as to the views and intentions of the Government of India. The result of these communications was an entire agreement on three important principles: 1st, that the territory in the actual possession, at the present moment of Shere Ali Khan, should be considered to constitute the limits of Afghanistan; 2nd, that beyond those limits the Ameer should make no attempt to exercise any influence or interference, and that the English Government should do all in their power to restrain him from any attempts at aggression; 3rd, that, for their part, the Imperial Government should use all their influence to prevent any attack by the Emir of Bokhara upon Afghan territory.

These general principles were for the moment quite sufficient to have a most useful practical result, in enabling the Indian Government to give assurances to Shere Ali, and to give him advice also which tended to keep the peace, and to prevent any practical questions being raised. They were sufficient also to determine Russia in similar conduct in her relations with Bokhara, and in her relations also with fugitive members of Shere Ali's family who were pretenders to his throne. In all these matters both Russia and England acted with good faith on the spirit of the Agreement, during the whole of the three years and a half occupied by the discussion. But so long as there was no clear and definite understanding with Russia as to what she meant by "the territories in

the actual possession of Shere Ali," and so long especially as she avowed that she did not admit Badakshan and Wakhan to be a part of those territories, the Agreement had no permanent value. Accordingly, after the return of Mr. Forsyth to India, and after Lord Mayo and his Council had obtained the fullest information, both historical and geographical, on the northern extension of the Afghan Kingdom, they embodied their information in a despatch to me, dated May 20, 1870. It gave a precise definition to the northern and north-western frontiers of Afghanistan, emphatically asserted that they extended to the Upper Oxus, and indicated the point on the westward course of that river where they marched with provinces belonging to Bokhara.*

The Russian Government contested this definition of Afghanistan with some keenness, and especially insisted on representing Badakshan and Wakhan as dependencies of Bokhara. So late as December, 1872,† Prince Gortchakow maintained this view with extraordinary pertinacity, and offered a compromise on the western portion of Lord Mayo's boundary, which would have expressly abandoned the claim of Shere Ali to the disputed province of Badakshan. At last the Emperor of Russia personally intervened, and sent Count Schouvalow on a mission to London,

* Ibid., No. 60, Inclos., p. 45–7.

† Correspondence with Russia, 1873, No. 2, p. 4.

for the purpose of conceding the contention of the British Government that the Upper Oxus should be admitted as the northern frontier of Afghanistan. His Majesty said that "there might be arguments used respectively by the departments of each Government; but he was of opinion that such a question should not be a cause of difference between the two countries, and he was determined that it should not be so."* On the 24th of January, 1873, this admission of the Emperor was suitably acknowledged by Lord Granville,† and the discussion terminated.‡

I know it will be asked by scoffers what was the worth of this understanding when it had been laboriously attained? What was the worth of these assurances when they had been mutually exchanged? My answer is a very short one. They were of no value at all when the foreign policy of England came to be directed in the spirit of those by whom this question is asked. Neither international Agreements of this kind, nor even formal Treaties are worth anything in the event of war, or in the event of avowed preparations for war. Governments are not obliged

---

* Ibid., No. 3, p. 12. † Ibid., No. 4, p. 13.

‡ It has been represented by Sir Henry Rawlinson that the admission by the Emperor of Russia of our contention respecting the limits of Afghanistan was conceded in order to secure our acquiescence in the Khivan Expedition. I see no proof of this. No British Government in its senses would have gone to war with Russia to prevent that Expedition.

to wait till the first actual blow has been struck by another Government, using, in the meantime, the language of insult and of menace. When the Prime Minister, speaking at Russia, boasted after a Guildhall dinner, that England could stand more than one, or even two, or even three campaigns; when the Home Secretary, speaking of Russia, told the House of Commons with mimetic gestures, that she was "creeping, creeping, creeping," where that Minister had known for months that Russia had openly declared she would go if she were required to do so; when the Cabinet as a whole had summoned the Reserves at home, and had ordered troops from India to enable them to act in the spirit of these harangues—then, indeed, peaceful understandings and Agreements became of no avail.

But if it is asked by reasonable men, and in a reasonable spirit, what the actual force and value of the understanding with Russia was, during the years when it was unaffected by passionate suspicions, and by undignified threats, then the question deserves a much more careful examination than has yet been given to it.

In the first place, then, it was not an Agreement which was understood by either party as prohibiting Russia from having any communication whatever with the Ameer of Cabul. This has been pretended or assumed, but it is not true. In the despatch of

Prince Gortchakow, dated the 7th of March, 1869,* which is one of the most authoritative documents in the case, the promise of Russia to abstain from the exercise of any influence in Afghanistan was given, indeed, in positive terms. But it was given also with an explanatory addition, which makes it quite clear wherein the whole force and meaning of that promise was understood to lie. What the Emperor disclaimed and abjured as "entering into his intentions" was, any "intervention or interference whatever opposed to the independence of that State." Communications of courtesy, or even communication having for their sole aim the promotion of commercial intercourse, were certainly not excluded by this engagement.

That this was the clear understanding of both parties before the passionate jealousy of our Ministers was roused by their own policy in the Turkish question, is proved by the whole course of events up to the appearance of that question above the political horizon. In June, 1870, after the Agreement had been fully established between the two Governments, Prince Gortchakow himself† communicated to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg a letter which General Kaufmann had addressed to Shere Ali on the very important and delicate subject of the asylum given at Tashkend to the fugitive Abdul Rahman Khan, one of the

* Central Asia, II., 1873, Inclos. p. 3.
† Ibid., No. 58, p. 43.

aspirants to the throne of Cabul. This letter is a very full one, entering freely and frankly into an explanation of the political relations between Russia and Cabul, as well as of the relations between both and the Khanate of Bokhara. It addressed the Ameer, as "under the protection of the Indian Government," intimated that with that Government Russia was in friendly relations, warned him gently against interfering with Bokhara, as being under the protection of the Czar.* No hint was dropped by the British Ambassador that this direct communication from the Russian Governor-General to the Ameer of Cabul was considered as involving any departure whatever from the spirit or from the letter of the understanding between the two Governments. Within six days of the same date this very same letter came under the special notice of Lord Mayo, to whom it was referred by the Ameer as having somewhat puzzled and alarmed him. Lord Mayo took the trouble of writing an elaborate letter to Shere Ali, explaining the true meaning of General Kaufmann's letter, and expressing the highest satisfaction with it.† In December, 1873, the Government of India were acquainted with the fact that a letter of similar purport had been addressed to the Ameer in August of that year, informing him of the Russian conquest of Khiva.‡ No

* Ibid., No. 58, Inclos., p. 44.
† Central Asia, I., 1878, p. 184.
‡ Ibid., No. 5, Inclos. 2, p. 8.

adverse notice was taken of this fact by the Government of India, or by the Government at home. These facts, then very recent, were in possession of the present Government when they succeeded to office. But as neither Lord Mayo, nor Lord Northbrook, nor Lord Granville had remonstrated with Russia on the subject of these letters, so neither did Lord Derby nor Lord Salisbury. It is remarkable that the first of these letters from General Kaufmann which was transmitted to Lord Salisbury was one dated the 25th of February, 1874, acknowledging the nomination by the Ameer of Abdoollah Jan as his heir-apparent, and congratulating him on this selection.* Not one word of remonstrance was uttered—not one word of suspicion breathed. In May of the same year Lord Northbrook drew Lord Salisbury's attention—not to the mere fact that Shere Ali had received another letter from the Russian officer then in command at Tashkend,—but to the fact that in this letter allusion was made to some unknown request which the Ameer had made.† Still I find no record of any warning to Russia that her officers were violating the Agreement with England. In the Autumn of 1875 matters went still farther; not only was another letter sent from the Russian Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, but it was

* Ibid., No. 13, Inclos. 2, p. 15.

† Ibid., No. 15, Inclos. 1, p. 16.

sent by a messenger who is called an "Envoy." It was a letter informing the Ameer of the return to Tashkend of General Kaufmann after his absence for half a year at St. Petersburg. But it contained a sentence which caught the ever-wakeful attention of the Cabul authorities. Kaufmann spoke of the alliance between England and Russia as an "omen for those countries which under the protection of the Emperor of Russia, and the Queen of England, live in great peace and comfort."* The Afghan politicians seem to have put the somewhat overstrained interpretation upon this sentence that the Russian Government had made itself partner in the protection of Afghanistan. They said "this paragraph is in a new tone. God knows what State secrets are concealed in it." Still no alarm was taken. This news from the Cabul Diaries was forwarded to the Foreign Office without note or comment from the Indian Secretary. The reply of the Ameer was forwarded in similar silence on the 6th of January, 1876.† On the 25th of August the same ceremony was repeated,‡ and this time a very long letter from General Kaufmann to the Ameer was enclosed to the Foreign Office by Lord Lytton's Government, but still without any indications, even of uneasiness, on the subject. The letter gave a detailed narrative of the transaction which had led to the Russian conquest of Kokhand.§

* Ibid., No. 58, Inclos. 6, p. 65.
† Ibid., No. 60, p. 66.
‡ Ibid., No. 69, p. 75.
§ Ibid., Inclos. 6, p. 77.

It is established therefore by a long series of transactions, extending over several years, and passing under the view of successive Ambassadors, Viceroys, and Secretaries of State, that the Agreement with Russia was not understood by either Power to preclude direct communications of courtesy passing between Russian officials and the Ameer of Cabul.

At last, on the 16th of September, 1876, but not sooner, the new Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, telegraphed to Lord Salisbury that he had sent off a despatch expressing a decided opinion that her Majesty's Government ought to remonstrate with Russia on Kaufmann's repeated correspondence with the Ameer by hand of Russian agents, two of whom were reported to be then in Cabul. Lord Lytton added words which imply that the Government of India had before entertained objections to this intercourse, but "had not hitherto asked her Majesty's Government to formally remonstrate on this open breach of repeated pledges."* This assertion is unsupported by any evidence so far as regards the Government of India under previous Viceroys, and as Lord Lytton had then occupied that position for only five months, the self-restraint of the Government of India under the Russian provocation cannot have been of long endurance.

On the 22nd of September, 1876, Lord Salisbury forwarded this telegram to the Foreign Office, with the

* Ibid., No. 71, Inclos. pp. 79, 80.

wholly new and very important information that he "concurred in the views expressed by the Viceroy, and was of opinion that, as suggested by his Excellency, a remonstrance against General Kaufmann's proceedings should be addressed to the Russian Government without delay."*

It is remarkable that the Foreign Secretary, in complying with the request of his colleague, the Secretary of State for India, indicated a consciousness that Kaufmann's letters were not a breach of the Russian Engagement, and did not constitute a legitimate ground of diplomatic remonstrance. He took care to found his remonstrance not upon the letters, but upon "reports from other sources that the instructions of the Asiatic agent (who took the letter to Cabul) were to induce Shere Ali to sign an offensive and defensive alliance with the Russian Government, as well as a Commercial Treaty." This, of course, is an entirely different ground of complaint—and a legitimate one, if there had been the smallest evidence of its truth. But Lord Derby, without committing himself to belief in this report, confined himself strictly to it as the only ground on which remonstrance was to be made by our Ambassador. Lord Augustus Loftus was not ordered to ask from the Russian Government a promise that Kaufmann should write no more letters. He was only ordered to ask "a written disclaimer

* Ibid., No. 71, p. 79.

of any intention on their part to negotiate treaties with Shere Ali without the consent of her Majesty's Government."*

It is impossible not to ask when and how this new light came to flash on the Government of India and on the Indian Secretary of State. A little attention to dates, and to the character of contemporary events may perhaps help to explain the mystery.

It was in December, 1875, that the Cabinet of London had become aware that Russia was moving in concert with Austria-Hungary and with Germany for some intervention on behalf of the Christian subjects of the Porte.† On the 30th of that month the Andrassy Note had been signed at Buda-Pesth. This union of the "Three Emperors" had excited the jealousy and the fear of the Turkish party in England; and we have seen that on the 25th of January, 1876, the Cabinet of London had felt itself compelled, but with extreme and avowed reluctance, to give its adhesion to that celebrated Instrument. During the months of February, March, and April, 1876, further negotiations were being carried on between the same dreadful "Three" to secure the peace of Europe, by putting some effectual pressure on the Turks for the reform of their administration. During the month of April especially, the influence and the power of Russia

---

* Ibid., No. 72, p. 80.

† See ante, Vol. I. Ch. iv., p. 159.

in these negotiations was becoming more and more apparent, and were leading to some real concert among the Powers of Europe in spite of the dilatory and evasive policy of the Cabinet of London. They did at last produce in May the Berlin Memorandum, which, as a means of arriving at peace, was destroyed by the Queen's Government, but which as a means of fortifying Russia in the alternative of war, was immensely strengthened by the solitary resistance of the English Government.

It was in the midst of these transactions that the new Viceroy of India was appointed, and was charged with personal and with written instructions which will be examined presently. Before the 16th of September, the day on which Lord Lytton sent off his excited telegram about Kaufmann's letters, the European embroglio had become very thick indeed. Russia by her firm yet moderate attitude and language,—the public feeling of the British people and their just indignation against the Turks,—were compelling the Government to bow beneath the storm, and to threaten Turkey with complete abandonment in the event of Russia declaring war. But the keener spirits in the Cabinet were restive and fretful under this position of affairs. On the 20th of September, Mr. Disraeli had made his celebrated speech at Aylesbury,* and we can therefore understand with-

* See ante, Vol. I. Ch. vi., p. 270.

out much difficulty the feelings under which, two days later, Lord Salisbury declared, for the first time, and in the face of his own previous acquiescence,—that Kaufmann's letters to the Ameer were a breach of the Engagement between England and Russia in respect to their relations with Afghanistan.

Before proceeding, however, to trace the career of the new Viceroy of India in the Imperial policy which he went out to prosecute, I must return for a moment to the Agreement with Russia, for the purpose of pointing out one other condition of things, and one other course of conduct, which was almost as effectual as warlike threats in depriving it of all force and value. The course of conduct I refer to is that of dealing with the advances of Russia in Central Asia after the Agreement had been made, precisely in the same way in which we might have been entitled, or at least disposed, to deal with them, if no such Agreement had been come to. The whole object and purpose of the Agreement was to establish a boundary line beyond which we need not be in a constant fuss about Russian aggression. If there was any sense or meaning in an understanding that Afghanistan was not to be encroached upon, even by the influence of Russia, that meaning was that Russian advances which did not come near that Kingdom should cease to be the object of our jealousy and resentment. Even before that Agreement was made I never could see that, internationally, we had any more right to remonstrate with Russia on her

advances in Central Asia, than she would have had to remonstrate with us on our advances in Hindostan. Of course nations may make anything they choose a ground of quarrel and of war. But it is in the highest degree undignified on the part of any Government to be perpetually remonstrating with another upon acts which it is not prepared to resist, and which it is not in a position to prevent. For this reason, even before the Agreement with Russia was made, I have always regarded with a feeling akin to mortification the language of those who in the press, or in Parliament, or in diplomacy, have been continually declaiming against the natural and inevitable advances of Russia in Central Asia. But since the Agreement with Russia was concluded, acknowledging Afghanistan as under our predominant influence, and as excluded from the influence of Russia, it has always appeared to me that the continuance of this language is tainted, in addition, with something very like a breach of faith. It is not only undignified, but it is unfair, to accept that Agreement as binding Russia not to advance, either by actual conquest or by establishing influence, beyond a certain line, and at the same time as leaving us as free as ever to denounce her operations when conducted far within that line. Outside of Afghanistan, Russia unquestionably kept her freedom. We, of course, kept our freedom also. But there is no truth in representing any Russian movement beyond Afghanistan as a breach

of the Agreement of 1873. Yet this has been the actual conduct, I will not say of the English people, but of too many who assume to speak on their behalf. It has appeared even in the official language of Ambassadors and of Secretaries of State, and it has led public writers of high authority with their countrymen, to make accusations against Russia which on the face of them are unjust, and which have had a powerful effect in stimulating national animosities, and inspiring unmanly fears.

Of this a signal example is to be found in the language we have held upon the subject of Khiva. It is generally asserted, and widely believed, that in the conquest of Khiva, Russia has been guilty towards us of flagrant breaches of engagement. The papers presented to Parliament disprove this accusation altogether. They do more than this: they convict those who make these accusations of that kind of reckless misquotation, which, although often the effect of mere passion, approaches very nearly to the bad faith which they charge against Russia. We have habitually treated certain intimations made to us by Russia of her intentions, and certain declarations of her policy, as if those intimations and declarations were in the nature of binding promises and of international engagements. But the intimation of an intention is not necessarily a promise. A declaration, or an assurance as to policy is not necessarily an engagement. It is not so in private life, and it is still less so in the intercourse of

nations. There may, of course, be circumstances which give a higher value to the intimation of an intention than would otherwise attach to it. If it is made, for example, as part of a negotiation, and in connexion with benefits received on account of it; or, again, if it is made by a powerful nation to a weak one as an assurance on which it may rely,—then, indeed, such an intimation may assume the character of a promise. But this character entirely depends on the context not merely of words, but of circumstances and events. The mere intimation of an intention by one Government to another does not in itself amount to, or even imply, an engagement. This would be true, even if the intimations of intention, or the declarations of policy on which we rely, had been made without express reservations and explanations limiting their effect. But the intimations of intention, and the declarations and assurances as to policy which have been made to us by Russia, on the subject of her relations with the States of Central Asia, have been almost uniformly made under express and emphatic reservations which it is customary with us to suppress or to ignore. In the Circular Despatch to the Russian Ambassadors at the various Courts of Europe which was issued by Prince Gortchakow in November, 1864, the Cabinet of St. Petersburg set forth, for the information of the world, the principles which would guide her policy in Central Asia. In this State Paper not only was everything like a promise avoided, but

declarations were made obviously inconsistent with the possibility of any such promise being given. Russia likened her own position in Central Asia to the position of the British Government in India, and pointed out that annexations had been, and might still be, the necessary results of contact with semi-barbarous States. It is true that she expressed her desire to avoid this result if it were possible to do so. But she expressed also her determination to establish free commercial routes, and to punish tribes who lived on plunder. This in itself was tantamount to a declaration of war against all the Khanates of Central Asia. Russia did not conceal the import and the possible consequences of her determination in the matter. It demanded, as the Circular very truly said, "a complete transformation of the habits of the people." But no such transformation could be effected without "teaching the populations in Asia that they will gain more in favouring and protecting the caravan trade than in robbing it." Nor was the Circular silent on the methods of operation which were contemplated for the purpose of teaching this lesson. "It is a peculiarity of Asiatics," it said, "to respect nothing but visible and palpable force." "If the robbers once punished, the expedition is withdrawn, the lesson is soon forgotten: its withdrawal is put down to weakness." Finally, with a downrightness of expression which leaves nothing to be misunderstood, the Circular declared in its concluding sentence that "the Imperial

Cabinet, in assuming this task, takes as its guide the interests of Russia."*

Such is the nature of the Manifesto which, it is pretended, held out a promise to Europe that Russian annexations and conquests in Central Asia were to cease for ever. It would be much nearer the truth to say, on the contrary, that it was a Manifesto rendering it certain that those conquests could not and would not be restrained. Yet public writers of the highest authority never speak of this document without that kind of misrepresentation which is the natural result of strong antipathies or of overmastering hobbies. Among these writers no one is more justly distinguished than Sir Henry Rawlinson. With unequalled knowledge of those regions, and with great powers of statement, he never loses an opportunity of insisting on the danger arising to us out of the advances of Russia in Central Asia. Yet whilst treating the subject much more ably than most other writers, and whilst trying to state fairly the physical and military necessities to which these advances are often due, he never refers to this Russian Manifesto without unconsciously misquoting it, and misinterpreting it. Thus in the Memorandum of 1869, he speaks of it as "asserting with categorical precision that the expansion of the Empire had now reached its limit." I look in vain in the Manifesto for any such declaration, or for

* Central Asia, No. II., 1873, pp. 72–5.

anything which is at all equivalent. It is true, indeed, that the Manifesto speaks of a military line which had then been established between Lake Issyk-Kaul and the Syr-Daria River (Jaxartes), as a line which had the advantage of "fixing for us with geographical precision the limit up to which we are bound to advance and at which we must halt." But the very next words demonstrate that the "must" in this sentence referred entirely to physical and political difficulties which the Russian Government were unwilling to encounter, but which they did by no means promise never to encounter, if by circumstances they should be led or forced to do so. On the contrary, the whole tone and the whole argument of the Manifesto is directed to reserve to the Russian Government perfect freedom for the future in her dealings with the States of Central Asia, and to emphasise with the greatest care the conditions which rendered it absolutely necessary that this freedom should be maintained.

Let us now look at the treatment which Russia has received at our hands in respect to later declarations, in their connexion with later conquests.

In 1869 rumours began to get abroad that the military activities of the Russian Government were likely soon to take the direction of Khiva. Towards the end of February in that year, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg had a conversation with the Emperor on the general subject of Central Asian politics, when the Emperor, whilst disclaiming any feeling of

coveteousness in those regions, took care to remind her Majesty's Government of their own experience in India, and to point out that the Russian position in Asia was "one of extreme difficulty, in which our actions may depend not so much upon our own wishes as upon the course pursued towards us by the Native States around us." Nothing could be clearer than this for the purpose of distinguishing between engagements or promises of any kind, and explanations or assurances of policy, of wishes, and of intentions. But if anything more clear on this subject were desired, it was not long before it was supplied. On the 31st of November, in the same year (1869), Sir Andrew Buchanan had another conversation with Prince Gortchakow on the rumoured expedition against Khiva, in which the Russian Minister gave expression to very strong assurances of his policy and intention against farther extensions of territory in Asia, and resting the departures which had taken place from former intentions of a like kind, on the force of circumstances. Our Ambassador reported this conversation in a despatch dated December 1, 1869.* But as more definite information soon reached him in regard to the formidable character of the Expedition which was said to be in contemplation, he returned to the charge with Prince Gortchakow on the 29th of December. He placed in the Prince's hands an extract from his despatch

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 19.

reporting the previous conversation. The Prince read it with entire approval of its accuracy, but when he came to the passage that "he would not consent to an extension of the Empire" he stopped to observe and to explain that this "could only mean that he would disapprove of it, as he could not prevent such an eventuality, were the Emperor to decide in its favour."†

Under these circumstances, we have no excuse for the unfairness of representing the repeated intimations and assurances of Russia on this subject as meaning anything more than the Emperor and his Minister carefully explained them to mean. The unfairness is all the greater as we are generally guilty of it without the smallest reference to the question whether Russia had or had not a just ground of quarrel with the Khan of Khiva. Yet the case stated by Russia against the Khan, as reported by Sir A. Buchanan, is a case of indisputable justice, and even necessity. In June, 1871, Sir A. Buchanan explained that the principal object of Russia seemed to be "to secure a safe commercial route to Central Asia from the Caspian and her Trans-Caucasian provinces." This is in strict accordance with the declared policy of Russia in the manifesto of 1864. But more than this. The suppression and punishment of piracy on land is as just

† Ibid., No. 25, p. 22.

a cause of war as the suppression of piracy by sea. It is not denied that the Khan of Khiva was simply the ruler of robber tribes, and that he lived upon the revenues of plunder. But in addition to these just causes of quarrel the Russian Government asserted that he held Russian subjects in captivity and slavery. No attempt is made to deny or to refute this assertion.

I am informed by my relative, Sir John McNeill, that as long as forty years ago, when he represented the British Government at the Court of Persia, he had to use his endeavours to redeem from captivity in Khiva a number of Russian subjects. I am also informed by Lord Northbrook that the Khivan Envoy who came to him at Simla in 1873 confessed that the Khan was in possession of Russian captives. The assertion, therefore, of the Russian Government, that it had just cause of complaint against the Khan, has not only never been refuted, but is one which we know to be consistent with all the probabilities of the case. Yet we, a Nation and a Government which spent some eleven millions in redeeming from captivity in Abyssinia a few subjects of the Queen, are never tired of complaining that the Emperor of Russia for similar reasons and for other reasons quite as good, and of far more permanent value, sent a military expedition against Khiva, and finally reduced that Khanate to a condition under which it could rob no

more.* It is quite true that in 1873, Russia was induced by our persistent expressions of jealousy and remonstrance to repeat her assurances of intention, in words less guarded by express limitations than they had been before. These new assurances were given to Lord Granville on the 8th of January, 1873, by Count Schouvalow, when he was sent by the Emperor to London to communicate to the British Government his Majesty's assent to our long contention on the boundaries of Afghanistan. This was the main object of his mission ; and the new assurances of policy in respect to Khiva seem to have been volunteered as upon subjects not immediately connected with the principal matter in hand. But those assurances of policy and of intention, strong as they were in particular expressions, have, as usual, been habitually misrepresented. Count Schouvalow declared that "not only was it far from the intentions of the Emperor to take possession of Khiva, but positive orders had been prepared to prevent it, and directions given that the conditions imposed should be such as could not in any

* Sir Henry Rawlinson tells us that one of the consequences of the Russian conquest of Khiva was that the Khan lost his revenue from the outlying Turcoman tribes, "whose allegiance to him, never very willingly paid, has been further shattered by the abolition of the slave-trade in the Khiva market, and the consequent suppression of their means of livelihood."—*England and Russia in the East*, p. 330.

way lead to a prolonged occupancy of Khiva."* These words, even if they were to be strictly construed as the record of a definite international engagement, which they certainly were not, would not prevent the subjugation of Khiva to the condition of a dependent State, nor would they prevent the annexation of some Khivan territory to the Russian Empire. It is probable that neither of these contingencies were then contemplated by the Emperor. But neither of them are definitely excluded by the terms of Count Schouvalow's assurance. It is true that the general limitations which Russia had so often placed upon her assurances of intention in Central Asia, were not repeated by Count Schouvalow when he spoke of the Khivan Expedition. But most undue advantage is taken of this fact, when we forget that those limitations had always been explained to be inherent in the nature of the case, and that even if they had never been formally recorded, as they frequently had been, they ought to have been understood.

Accordingly, when in January, 1874, Lord Granville had to acknowledge the receipt of the Treaty with the Khan of Khiva which recorded the results of the Russian conquest, he very wisely declared that he saw no advantage in comparing those results with the "assurances of intention" which had been given by Count Schouvalow. Lord Granville carefully

* Corresp. with Russia, Central Asia, 1873, No. 3, p. 13.

avoided calling them promises. He gave to them the correct name, and he absolutely refrained from those accusations of bad faith in which irresponsible writers have so freely indulged.*

We have now brought the narrative of events, so far as our direct relations with Russia through the Foreign Office are concerned, down to the Khivan Expedition, and to her acknowledgment of our contention respecting the boundaries and respecting the political position of Afghanistan. We have also, in connexion with this subject, somewhat anticipated the parallel events which were taking place in India, by indicating the changed conditions of feeling under which Lord Lytton was sent out to India. But in order to understand clearly what was to follow, we must go back for a little to fill up the interval which elapsed between the Umballa Conference in 1869, and the violation of Lord Mayo's pledges which immediately followed when Lord Northbrook ceased to be the Viceroy of India, in April, 1876.

* Russia, II., 1874, No. 2, p. 7.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM THE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA IN 1873 TO THE FRERE NOTE IN JANUARY, 1875.

WE have seen the impression which Lord Mayo derived from the language of Shere Ali at Umballa,—that the Ameer thought very little and cared even less about the Russian advances in Central Asia. Yet this was at a time when Russia had just established her paramount influence over his nearest neighbour—a neighbour intimately connected with all the revolutions in his own country—a neighbour whose country had been, and still was, the habitual refuge of defeated candidates for his throne. But although Lord Mayo was fully justified in this impression, and although it was evident that the mind of the Ameer was engrossed by the contest in which he had been engaged, and which was not even then absolutely closed,—so that he thought of nothing so much as his desire for a dynastic guarantee,—it does not follow that he was ignorant of the place which Russian advances had in the policy of the English Government. It is a vain attempt to

conceal anything from Afghans as to the motives of our policy towards the Kingdom of Cabul. Even if it were our object to deceive them, it would be impossible. Their suspicions outrun every possibility of concealment. Accordingly, there is curious evidence that at the Umballa Conference Noor Mohammed, the trusted Minister of the Ameer, indicated a perfectly correct appreciation of the position of his country in its relation both to Russia and to England. At a meeting held on the 1st of April, 1869, he showed considerable suspicion about our professed eagerness to promote trade with Afghanistan. Mr. Seton Karr, the Foreign Secretary, and Major Pollock, the Commissioner, tried to reassure him. Noor Mohammed then said, "You have given us guns, treasure, &c. &c. You would not do so without some special motive. What is your motive?" The Foreign Secretary answered, "In order that the Government on our borders may be independent and strong, just as Cashmere and Khotul are;" explaining further what had been done in respect to the Cashmere succession. Upon this Noor Mohammed replied, apparently with some touch of fun, that he accepted the explanation, and "would not credit us with ulterior motives," and then added these significant words: "He hoped we should have a good understanding, and the advantage of it to us (the English) would be, that were the Russians or other enemy to come, even though the Afghans themselves could not successfully keep them

out of the country, they could harass them in every way."*

The inference I draw from this remarkable observation of the Afghan Minister is that he was perfectly aware of the political object we had in view in supporting and strengthening the Afghan Kingdom, and that the indifference exhibited at that time both by him and by the Ameer on the subject of Russian advancés, was due not only to the fact that they regarded foreign aggression as a distant danger, but also to the fact that they knew they could count on our own self-interest leading us to assist them if the danger should ever come nearer.

If, however, the mind of the Ameer had been under any anxiety on the subject of danger from Russia, that anxiety would have been removed by the information which Lord Mayo was able to communicate to him soon after the Umballa Conference—namely, the information that Russia had agreed to recognise, as belonging to Afghanistan, all the territories then in his actual possession. He had further, the friendly assurances of General Kaufmann, which Lord Mayo himself had taken the trouble of explaining to him as assurances with which the Viceroy was highly pleased. Further, he had the actual conduct of the Russian Governor-

* Notes of Umballa Conference enclosed in Lord Mayo's letter of April 4, 1869.

General in refusing to allow Abdul Rahman Khan to excite disturbances in Afghanistan, and also in arresting movements on the part of the Khan of Bokhara which compromised the peace of the Afghan frontier. On the other hand, Shere Ali himself had shown that he was fully aware of the condition on which our support was given to him, namely, the condition that he would abstain from aggression upon his neighbours, and especially on those immediate neighbours who were avowedly under the influence and protection of Russia. In compliance with this condition Shere Ali, under the influence and by the advice of the Government of India, had refrained from several frontier operations to which he would have been otherwise inclined, and in particular from annexing Kirkee and Charjui.* The Emperor of Russia had heartily acknowledged the good faith and the success with which the Government of India had been acting in this matter, and considered it as a gratifying proof of the good effects of the Agreement which had been arrived at between the two Powers in respect to their mutual relations in the East.

No occasion for any special communication with the Ameer arose during the rest of Lord Mayo's viceroyalty, which was terminated by his calamitous death in the spring of 1872, nor during the first year of the viceroyalty of his successor. Only one annoy-

* Afghanistan, I., 1878, No. 22, p. 105.

ance to the Ameer arose out of the policy of Lord Mayo, acting under the direction of the Government at home. There had been a long-standing dispute in respect to the boundaries of the Afghan and Persian Kingdoms in the province of Seistan. Lord Mayo, thinking that it might some day lead to complications, had readily agreed to a proposal that it should be settled by the arbitration of British officers, sent expressly to survey the country, and to adjust the line of frontier. The duty was assigned to, and was carefully executed by, General Sir F. Goldsmid, one of the ablest officers at the disposal of the Government of India, and having special qualifications for the service. General Sir Frederick Pollock lent his aid to Noor Mohammed, the Afghan Minister in watching the Afghan case. The decision was one which did not give to the Ameer all that he considered to be his own. The device of settling such matters by arbitration, although eminently reasonable in itself, is one not yet familiar to Asiatics, and not readily understood by them. They do not easily believe in the perfect impartiality of anybody, and it is natural that in such cases they should regard an adverse decision with mortification and distrust.

We now come to the transactions which led to the Conferences at Simla in 1873 between Lord Northbrook and the Prime Minister of the Ameer. As on these transactions both the Simla Narrative of Lord Lytton, and the London Narrative of Lord

Cranbrook, are little better than a mass of fiction, it will be necessary to state the facts accurately, and to confront them with those Narratives.

Early in March, 1873,* it became the duty of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to confirm the award which had been given in the Seistan Arbitration. Under the terms of the Arbitration this confirmation was final and binding, both on the Shah of Persia and on the Ameer of Cabul. It was well known how distasteful the result had been to the Ameer.

In connexion, therefore, with this Seistan Arbitration, and also in connexion with the final transactions between the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg on the boundaries of Afghanistan, it became desirable, in the spring of 1873, that the Government of India should have some more direct communication than usual with the Ameer, Shere Ali. On both these subjects, but especially on the first, Lord Northbrook thought it would be expedient to give him personal explanations tending to soothe irritation or to prevent misunderstanding. For these purposes, Lord Northbrook, through a letter from the Commissioner of Peshawur, which reached Cabul on the 27th of March,† requested the Ameer to receive a British officer at

---

* Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, p. 4.

† Ibid., p. 5. Enclos. 2 in No. 2.

Cabul, or Jellalabad, or Candahar, or at any other place in Afghanistan which the Ameer might name —not, of course, as a resident Envoy,* but on a special mission. True to the traditional policy of his family and race, the Ameer availed himself of the right which he had by Treaty and by the pledges of Lord Mayo, to intimate that he would prefer, in the first place at any rate, not to receive a British officer at Cabul, but to send his own Prime Minister to Simla. This reply was not given until the 14th of April, after long discussions in Durbar, at one of which the "Moonshee" of the British Agency was permitted to be present.* These debates showed great reluctance to abide by the Seistan award, and a disposition to use the Ameer's assent as a price to be given only in return for certain advantages which he had long desired. They show that the Ameer was reluctant even to send an Envoy of his own, and that this measure was referred to as a concession on his part to the wishes of the Viceroy.† They showed also the usual jealousy and dread of the presence of a British Envoy in Cabul, and of the pressure he might put upon the Ameer to accept proposals which might be distasteful to him. In all this, however, Shere Ali was acting within his right—standing on the faith of Treaties, and on the pledges of Lord Mayo. The

---

* Ibid., Enclos. 5, p. 7.
† Ibid., Enclos. 5 and 6, pp. 7, 8.

Viceroy, therefore, true, on his side, to the engagements and to the wise policy of his predecessors, abstained from pressing his request upon the Ameer, and at once, on the 25th of April, accepted the alternative he preferred.*

Let us now see how these facts are dealt with in the Simla and in the London Narratives. It suited the purpose with which both these Narratives were drawn up to represent the Ameer as having been at this time greatly alarmed by the advances of Russia, because this representation of the case helps to throw blame on Lord Northbrook for having (as alleged) refused to reassure him. Of course the fact that the Ameer did not seek any Conference at this time, but, on the contrary, only consented to it rather reluctantly, when it was proposed to him by the Government of India—is a fact which stands much in the way of such a representation of the case. Accordingly, both in the Simla Narrative and in the London Narrative, this fact is entirely suppressed, whilst, both by implication and by direct assertion, the impression is conveyed that the Ameer sought the Conference,—that he did so under the fear of Russian advances in Central Asia, and for the purpose of getting securities against them. The Simla Narrative, after quoting passages from the Durbar debate above mentioned, which did refer to Russia,

* Ibid., Enclos. 8, p. 9.

proceeds thus (para. 12): "With these thoughts in his mind, his Highness deputed Synd Noor Mohammed Shah, in the summer of 1873, to wait upon Lord Northbrook, and submit this and other matters to the consideration of the Viceroy."*

It would be quite impossible to gather from this that it was the Viceroy who had desired to open special communications with the Ameer, and that Shere Ali only offered to send his Minister in order to avoid receiving a British Envoy. But the London Narrative improves upon its Simla prototype. It not only represents that the Ameer was moved to send his Minister from his fear of Russia, but it professes to tell us more exactly how that fear then specially arose. It was the fall of Khiva. "The capture of Khiva," says paragraph 8 of the London Narrative, "by the forces of the Czar, in the spring of 1873, and the total subordination of that Khanate to Russia, caused Shere Ali considerable alarm, &c. Actuated by his fears on this score, his Highness sent a special Envoy to Simla in the summer of that year, charged with the duty of expressing them to the Government of India."† Now it so happens, as we have seen, that the Ameer's proposal to send his Minister was made on the 14th of April, whilst the capture of Khiva did not take place till the 10th of June. Even if the Ameer had possessed the power of

* Ibid., p. 262. † Ibid., p. 262.

seeing what was then going on at the distance of some 800 or 900 miles across the deserts of Central Asia, he would not have been much alarmed on account of Russian advances. On that very day, the 14th of April, Kaufmann and all his force were at the point of death from thirst and fatigue, in their advance on Khiva. They were saved only by the timely intervention of a "ragged Kirghiz," who led them to some wells. It was not till the 23rd of May, that Kaufmann reached the Oxus with only 1200 camels remaining out of the 10,000 with which the Expedition had been provided.* As for the "total subordination of the Khanate of Khiva to Russia," this was not effected till the date of the Treaty, which was not concluded till the 12th of August, and was not published at St. Petersburg till the 12th of December.† The statement, therefore, in the London Narrative, as to the circumstances which led to the Simla Conferences of 1873, is entirely misleading, and points to conclusions, in respect to the Ameer's motives, with which the real facts are entirely inconsistent. These facts must have been well known both at Calcutta and at the India Office, and they ought to have been correctly given.

The statement made both in the Simla and in the London Narrative as to the Ameer's condition of mind

* Schuyler's Turkistan, Vol. ii. p. 341.

† Russia, II., 1874., No. 2, p. 6.

when he sent his Minister, Noor Mohammed, to confer with the Viceroy, is a statement founded mainly on the reports of the Ameer's conversations with our native Agent at Cabul, and especially on those which were reported by that Agent on the 5th of May, 1873.* In the Simla Narrative (par. 11), some quotations are given from this Report of the language held by the Ameer; but these quotations are very partial, and avoid any reference to the most important passages which best indicate the opinions, the feelings, and the desires of the Ameer.

When we turn to the account given by our native Agent of the talk of the Ameer, it will be found that he referred, indeed, to the probability that Russia would soon take possession both of Khiva and of Merve, as one of the well-known sources of British anxiety and alarm. Any information he possessed about "the preparations for an advance of a Russian Army" seems to have been derived from "the English papers."† From this source apparently, he said that Merve would be taken by Russia "either in the current year or the next." This was over-shooting the mark indeed. But it shows what his mark was. It was his object and his game to work upon our alarm, and he dwelt upon the dangers of Russian aggression, as these had been long known, and long familiar to

* Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 2, pp. 110, 111.

† Afghan Corresp., II., 1878, No. 2, Enclos. 3, p. 6.

the Ameer, ever since the Umballa Conference,—to which, strange to say, he expressly referred, as the starting-point of his communications with the Government of India upon the subject. Considering the impression of Lord Mayo that he did not then attach any importance to it, and considering that Viceroy's express statement to me that Russia was never mentioned except incidentally during the whole conferences, it becomes clear that in the preceding narrative I have not over-estimated the significance of the language—apparently incidental—which was held on the 1st of April, 1869, at Umballa, by Noor Mohammed, in reference to the real position of the Afghan Kingdom in the policy of the British Government. The whole language of Shere Ali in the first week of May, 1873, was simply an amplification of the language of his Minister on that occasion in April, 1869. Shere Ali knew that we should defend him against external aggression, not for his sake, but for our own. He indicated unmistakably that he put the same interpretation upon all our efforts on his behalf which Noor Mohammed had put upon our presents at Umballa of money and of guns. He even went the length of implying that the security of the Afghan border was more our affair than his. He declared that at the Umballa Conference he had said so to Lord Mayo, "exonerating himself from making arrangements for that security."* This conviction that our

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 26, Enclos. 2, p. 110.

fear of Russia, and our own interests in resisting her, had got for him all he had received, animates the whole of his conversation. He trades upon our fear of Russia as a means of getting more. In the handling of this subject he shows great intelligence, and a very considerable extent of information. It may be said that the whole literature of Anglo-Indian Russophobia seems to have been familiar to him. All the points common to that school of opinion are adroitly brought to bear. He refers to the Russian denunciation of the Black Sea clauses in the Treaty of 1856, and founds upon it the usual inferences about the slipperiness of Russian diplomacy. He excites our jealousy about Merve as an approach to Herat, and he uses this jealousy to denounce our approval of the Seistan Arbitration. He rather sneers at the long difficulty which had arisen with Russia about the definition of the northern boundaries of his Kingdom, and says, "he was at a loss to surmise" what that difficulty was. He warns us that very soon the Russians would make communications which would exercise some influence in his country. Alternating with these stimulants to our fears and to our jealousy, he holds out certain promises based upon his estimate of our policy, and that estimate he explains to be, "that the border of Afghanistan is in truth the border of India." And again, that the "interests of the Afghan and English Governments are identical." Counting on the efficacy of these motives, heated to red heat

by his warnings and exhortations, he expected us to give him "great assistance in money and in ammunition of war," and "great aid for the construction of strong forts throughout the Afghan northern border." But more than this. These anxieties for a frontier which was "also ours" were associated with other anxieties about himself personally. Domestic troubles were never out of his mind; and his old demand for a dynastic guarantee betrays itself with little disguise. But feeling also that he wanted some personal security in the event of misfortune, "it was rather advisable," he said, "that the British Government, for its own and for his satisfaction, should set apart some property, either in India or in Europe, for his support, that he might retire there with his family and children, and find both accommodation and maintenance there." Finally, he expresses a wish that we should "commence forthwith to organise the Afghan troops, and to send from time to time large amounts of money with great numbers of guns and magazine stores, in order that he might steadily be able in a few years to satisfactorily strengthen the Afghan Kingdom."*

Such is the condition of mind and such the conversation on the part of the Ameer, which is represented in the Simla and London Narratives as indicating on the part of Shere Ali a sincere alarm on account of the advances of Russia, and an anxiety

* Ibid., p. iii.

to be reassured by fresh promises supplementary to those which had been already given. This representation of the conversation of the Ameer seems to me obviously erroneous. It is a conversation, on the contrary, which demonstrated that Shere Ali relied absolutely on our own sense of self-interest as our inducement to defend his Kingdom, and that he entertained an overweening confidence in his power of working on this motive to get out of us almost anything he wished to ask.

The inconvenience of this condition of affairs lay in the fact that the Ameer's estimate of our position and of our policy was substantially correct. He was right in thinking that our interest in Afghanistan was an interest of our own. It was perfectly natural that he should count upon this, and that he should desire to discount it also to the largest possible extent.

Although the particular conversation of May was not known to us at the India Office in the spring and summer of 1873, we did know quite enough to make us sure that the Ameer of Cabul had been aware, ever since the Umballa Conference, that we considered it part of our Indian Policy to maintain the "integrity and independence" of Afghanistan. The whole course of negotiations since, and our repeated communications both to him and to the Russian Government, had made this clearly understood between all the parties concerned. General Kauf-

mann had formally addressed the Ameer as a Prince under British protection, and two successive Viceroys had approved the letters and communications between the Ameer and Russian authorities in which this relation was assumed. We knew that the Ameer was disposed to make this acknowledged policy of the British Government the ground and the plea for making demands upon us which it would have been very unwise to grant,—the risk of which had been indicated by sad experience,—and the impolicy of which had been denounced at a later period by the detailed arguments of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Northbrook, in anticipation of the approaching Conference with Noor Mohammed, telegraphed to me that he proposed to inform the Cabul Envoy of the sense of a paragraph in a despatch which had not then reached me. It was a despatch summing up the results of the long negotiations with Russia which had then been concluded, and its 18th paragraph was devoted to setting forth the fundamental principle of that negotiation, that the "complete independence of Afghanistan was so important to the interests of British India, that the Government of India could not look upon an attack on Afghanistan with indifference." It added that "so long as the Ameer continued, as he had hitherto done, to act in accordance with our advice in his relations with his neighbours, he would

naturally receive material assistance from us, and that circumstances might occur under which we should consider it incumbent upon us to recommend the Indian Government to render him such assistance."* This was the paragraph, of which Lord Northbrook proposed, by telegraph on the 27th of June, to communicate the sense to the Envoy of the Ameer.†

It did not appear to me at the time that this proposed communication to the Ameer would be of much value. In its terms, carefully guarded as they were, it seemed to contain nothing that the Ameer did not know before, and indeed to fall greatly short of the interpretation he had shown signs of putting upon the assurances already given to him. Having, however, the greatest confidence in the discretion of the Viceroy, I contented myself with replying, by telegraph on the 1st of July, that, whilst I did not object to the general sense of the paragraph as a fitting "communication to Russia from the Foreign Office," I considered that "great caution was necessary in assuring the Ameer of material assistance which might raise undue and unfounded expectation." I added, "He already shows symptoms of claiming more than we may wish to give."‡

Accordingly when, eleven days after this telegram had been sent, the Conferences with the Cabul Envoy

---

* Afghanistan, I., 1878, No. 21, p. 102.

† Ibid., No. 21, p. 102. ‡ Ibid., No. 23, p. 108.

began at Simla, Lord Northbrook found that his first business was to disabuse the mind of the Afghan Minister of the extravagant and unwarrantable interpretations which he and the Cabul Durbar were disposed to entertain. Instead of under-estimating, they immensely over-estimated the sweep and bearing of the friendly assurances which had been given to them by Lord Lawrence and by Lord Mayo. They spoke as if the British Government "had bound itself to comply with any request preferred by the Ameer." This is the account given by Lord Northbrook himself in his subsequent account of the Simla Conferences.*

It will be seen that Lord Northbrook found himself very much in the same position as that in which Lord Mayo had found himself at Umballa in 1869. That is to say, he found himself in the presence of extravagant expectations, and of demands which it was impossible for him to concede. The Viceroy pursued the same wise course which, under similar circumstances, had been pursued by his predecessor. He determined to offer the Ameer everything that could be reasonably given, but resolutely to maintain the freedom of the British Government to judge of every contingency as it might arise.

The first formal Conference with the Minister of the Ameer took place on the 12th of July. At this

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.

meeting the Viceroy explained fully to the Envoy the terms and the effect of the final Agreement between England and Russia as to the boundaries of Afghanistan, and the effect it had in giving practical force and definite meaning to the long-standing Agreement that the Kingdom of Cabul was to be outside the sphere of Russian influence in Asia. He told the Afghan Minister that "the British Government would be prepared to use their best endeavours to maintain the frontier intact, so long as the Ameer or the Ruler of Afghanistan followed their advice as regards his external relations, and abstained from encroachments upon his neighbours." Again, somewhat more definitely, the Viceroy told him that "in the event of any aggression from without, if British influence were invoked, and failed by negotiation to effect a satisfactory settlement, it was probable that the British Government would in that case afford the Ruler of Afghanistan material assistance in repelling an invader." The Envoy declared that the "rapid advances made by the Russians in Central Asia had aroused the gravest apprehensions in the minds of the people of Afghanistan," who "could place no confidence in them, and would never rest satisfied unless they were assured of the aid of the British Government." The further discussion of the subject was reserved for another day.*

* Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 4, p. 112.

It now appeared to Lord Northbrook that whatever might be the real aims or motives of the Cabul Envoy in giving expression to these fears of Russia, and in asking for further engagements on the part of the British Government, it would be possible with safety to give a somewhat fuller, and more definite, expression to the settled policy of the Government than had been given in Lord Mayo's letter of 1869, or in any subsequent formal communications. Under this impression, twelve days after the first Conference with the Envoy, and six days before the next, he telegraphed to me on the 24th of July that the Ameer of Cabul was alarmed at Russian progress, was dissatisfied with general assurances, and was anxious to know definitely how far he could rely on our help if invaded. The Viceroy proposed to "assure him that if he unreservedly accepted and acted on our advice in all external relations, we would help him with money, arms, and troops, if necessary, to expel unprovoked invasion. We to be the judge of the necessity."* To this I replied on the 26th, after consulting the Cabinet, that we thought the Viceroy should "inform the Ameer that we did not at all share his alarm, and considered there was no cause for it; but that he might assure him we should maintain our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan, if he abided by our advice in external affairs."† The Viceroy interpreted this reply as we

* Ibid., No. 24, p. 108. † Ibid., No. 25, p. 108.

intended him to interpret it—namely, as sanctioning his proposed communication to the Envoy, but with the important preliminary declaration that we did not share in those fears, or alleged fears, of Russian aggression, on which he and his master seemed disposed to found the most unreasonable and extravagant expectations.

At the next Conference, on the 30th of July, Lord Northbrook soon found that all our caution and his own were fully needed. He found the Afghan Minister under the impression that the British Government were already "pledged to comply with any request for assistance preferred by the Ameer." The language of Noor Mohammed seems to have been almost a repetition of the Ameer's absurd talk to our native Agent at Cabul early in May. He wanted supplies of money and of arms. He pretended that the army he had already raised had been so raised on the faith of the promises of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. He demanded that the British Government, besides promising to assist the Ameer with money and with arms, according to the circumstances of the case, should also engage to have an army at his disposal, to be sent in at his request, to take whatever route he might require,* and to be immediately sent out again when it had done his work for him. No concessions towards the British Government were

* Lord Northbrook's Memorandum, para. 18.

offered on behalf of the Ameer in return for these demands—no proposal that it should enjoy greater powers of control, or even larger opportunities of observation. No offer was made to receive Envoys, or to let go the hold of the Ameer on Lord Mayo's pledge on the subject of British officers.*

Such were the modest and reasonable demands, made by Noor Mohammed, and urged upon the Viceroy by all those appeals to our fear and to our jealousy of Russia in which, doubtless, he had been well instructed by the Anglo-Indian press.

It was indeed high time to give some intimation to the Ameer in the sense of the message from the Cabinet. It was important to let him understand that we were not quite so timorous as he supposed, and to remind him that at the close of a long and difficult negotiation, during which Russia had behaved with entire good faith towards him and towards ourselves, we did not consider him justified in the pleas he put forward for unlimited demands upon us.

On the other hand, not to deal too seriously with the natural and transparent devices of the Ameer, the Viceroy determined to give to Noor Mohammed the fuller and more definite assurance which he had sought and had obtained our permission to give. Accordingly, on the 30th of July, Lord Northbrook, after having explained to the Envoy that

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 26, Inclos. 5, pp. 112, 113.

the British Government did not share the Ameer's apprehensions in respect to Russia, informed him that in the event of any actual or threatened aggression, it would be his duty to refer the question to the British Government, who would endeavour by negotiation and by every means in their power to settle the matter and avert hostilities. Should these endeavours to bring about an amicable settlement prove fruitless, Lord Northbrook gave the formal pledge that the British Government "were prepared to assure the Ameer that they would afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and would also, in case of necessity, aid him with troops."*

It will be observed that in this assurance the qualifying word "probably," which had been used before, was intentionally omitted. Besides this very definite assurance for the future, a present supply of ten lacs of rupees, besides five lacs more to be spent in arms, were placed at the disposal of the Ameer. Moreover, further discussion was by no means refused on the large and vague demands made by the Ameer in reference to the frontier defences of Afghanistan. The subject was one of great importance, and must necessarily involve many conditions on our part. But the Envoy manifested doubt how far his instructions justified him in committing himself to any definite arrangement. It is,

* Ibid., p. 114.

indeed, evident from the debate in the Cabul Durbar, which had been reported by our native Agent in April, that the Ameer had sent his Minister mainly to find out what we had to tell him, and how much he could get out of us, but with no instructions or authority to offer anything on his own part. Mr. Aitchison, who was Foreign Secretary to the Government of India at that time, and who conducted the Conferences with Noor Mohammed, has informed Lord Northbrook in a recent letter (dated Dec. 11, 1878) that the Afghan Envoy led him to believe that his master would not receive British officers as residents in his Kingdom, even in consideration of a guarantee that we should defend Afghanistan as we should defend British territory. Mr. Aitchison adds that Noor Mohammed had no instructions even to discuss such a subject with the Viceroy. Lord Northbrook, under these circumstances, had no other course open to him than to postpone the settlement of any further questions to a more favourable opportunity.*

Such are the transactions of which, in the London Narrative, the Government have presented the following as a truthful account :—

Paragraph 8.—"The capture of Khiva by the forces of the Czar in the spring of 1873, and the total subordination of that Khanate to Russia, caused Shere Ali considerable alarm, and led him to question

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 209.

the value of the pledges with reference to Afghanistan which had been given by his Imperial Majesty, and which had been communicated to his Highness by the British Government, actuated by his fears on this score. His Highness sent a special Envoy to Simla in the summer of that year, charged with the duty of expressing them to the Government of India."

Paragraph 9.—"Finding that the object of the Ameer was to ascertain definitely how far he might rely on the help of the British Government if his territories were threatened by Russia, Lord Northbrook's Government was prepared to assure him that, under certain conditions, the Government of India would assist him to repel unprovoked aggression. But her Majesty's Government did not share his Highness's apprehension, and the Viceroy ultimately informed the Ameer that the discussion of the question would be best postponed to a more convenient season."

It will be seen that this statement of the facts is erroneous in everything except in a few particulars. Like one of those specimens of quartz in which no gold is visible, but which is rich in the uniform diffusion of the precious metal, this narrative presents no actual misstatement to the eye, but is permeated with misrepresentation throughout its substance. It purports to set forth the circumstances which led Shere Ali to send his Minister to meet Lord Northbrook. It purports to give us the reply of the Government at home to a message from the Viceroy. It purports to

tell us what the action of the Viceroy was when he received that message. It purports to explain why certain parts of the discussion were postponed to another time. Of every one of these things it gives a wrong account. It is not true, as is implied, that the Ameer sent his Envoy because he was alarmed by the Russian conquest of Khiva. It is not true that the Government reply to Lord Northbrook's message consisted of a disclaimer of the alleged apprehensions of the Ameer. It is not true that the Viceroy was prevented by that message from giving to Shere Ali the assurance which he had asked leave to give. It is not true that the final postponement of certain questions stood in the connexion in which it is presented.

But such mere negations do not at all exhaust the wealth of these famous paragraphs in the peculiar characteristics for which they have acquired a just celebrity. There is in them a perfect union between the two great elements of all erroneous representation—namely, the suppression of things which are important facts, and the suggestion of things which are not facts at all. The ingenuity of the composition is a study. In the minuteness of the touches by which an immense breadth of effect is produced, we recognise the hand of a master. The introduction of the single word "but" just at the proper place, does great service. It suggests opposition and antagonism where there was none; and like the action of a pointsman

upon a railway, it turns off all the following train of facts into the track which is desired. Some of the devices, however, are rather gross. For example, the quotation of one half of a telegraphic message, and the suppression of the other half, exhibits more recklessness than skill. In like manner the total suppression of the fact that the Viceroy gave any assurances at all to the Ameer, is an expedient similar in kind. Perhaps it was too much to expect that the authors of the London Narrative should have pointed out the difference between the assurance which Lord Northbrook gave on the 12th of July, before he had asked and received fresh authority from the Government, and the much more unqualified assurance which he gave on the 24th after he had received that authority. This is one of the facts which is of the highest importance in itself and in its bearings. It is one which could not have been omitted by an historian of those facts who was careful and conscientious in his account of them. It might, however, be easily overlooked by a careless reader, or by a heated partisan. But to omit in a narrative which professes to give an account of these transactions, any notice whatever of the fact that the Viceroy did give some assurances to the Ameer in the sense in which he had desired to give them, is to be guilty of an unpardonable suppression of the truth. In like manner the statement that Lord Northbrook postponed certain discussions on the conditions to be attached to our

support of the Ameer, and to conceal the fact that this postponement arose out of the circumstance that the Envoy doubted his own authority to agree to any conditions at all, is another very wide departure from historical fidelity. Finally, the phrase selected to express the mind in which the Viceroy resorted to this postponement—the "convenient season" which carries us back to the words of Felix—is an unmistakable indication of the *animus* of the whole.

So far from Lord Northbrook having gratuitously postponed further discussion with the Ameer on the defences of his frontier to a "more convenient season," he expressed in his official despatch his "trust that the matter might be discussed with the Ameer in person."* With reference to some important frontier questions, the Envoy was charged on his return to his master with a Memorandum, in which it was suggested that a British officer of rank, with a competent staff, should be sent to examine thoroughly the Northern and North-Western frontiers of Afghanistan, and then should confer personally with the Ameer regarding the condition of the border, and might submit the opinions he had formed on the whole question of the defences of his frontier.† In forwarding this proposal to me, Lord Northbrook explained that although the

* Ibid., No. 26, p. 109.
† Ibid., No. 26, Inclos. 6, p. 115.

Government of India thought that the presence of accredited British officers at Cabul, Herat, and possibly also at Candahar, would for many reasons be desirable, they were fully alive to the difficulties in the way of such a measure, until the objects and policy of the British Government were more clearly understood and appreciated in Afghanistan. It was possible that some of those difficulties might be removed by personal communication.

We have seen that in the private and confidential conversations which had taken place at Simla with Noor Mohammed, this subject had been broached. A very large amount of respect seems to me to be due to that Minister from the accounts we have of his conduct on these occasions. He seems to me to have put the very unreasonable demands of the Ameer in the least unreasonable aspect which could be given to them, and to have uniformly explained his own views with truth and candour. In this matter of the mission of British officers his language was that, "speaking as a friend, and in the interests both of his own and of the British Government, he could not recommend that a specific request should be preferred to the Ameer for British officers to be stationed at certain given places." To this measure it is evident that the Ameer's objections still continued to be insuperable, and as he knew or suspected that special Envoys would probably enter upon the subject, and urge upon him a change of

policy, his objection very rationally extended even to such temporary missions. On the other hand, the Government of India knew its own pledges, and was determined to fulfil its promises. To put upon the Ameer any pressure upon this subject would have been an unquestionable breach of these. Shere Ali did not respond to the proposal of Lord Northbrook, and it necessarily fell through in consequence. There was nothing new in this—nothing in the least suspicious. Shere Ali simply continued in the same mind upon this question in which Lord Mayo found him at Umballa, and Lord Northbrook respected the pledges which had been given there.

On the 13th of November the Ameer replied to the Viceroy's letter of the 15th of September. It is undoubtedly rather a sulky letter. But much allowance ought to be made for the position of the Ameer. Considering the expectations which we have seen that he entertained,—considering the immense and unconditional advantages which he had expected to extract from us by playing on our fear of Russia,—considering too, the deep mortification with which he evidently regarded the Seistan arbitration, it is not surprising that he should have expressed dissatisfaction. After all, he only intimated that if he was to get no more than Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo had given him, it was useless to send Noor Mohammed to Simla. He had got something more in an assurance which was more

distinct. But as compared with what he wanted, the difference may have been inappreciable to him. He showed his irritation also by the terms in which he declined to allow a British officer to pass through his dominions. He showed, likewise, another feeling, —that of suspicion, by not taking possession of the sum of money which the Viceroy placed at his disposal. There is the best reason to believe that the cause of this was that he suspected the money to be the price of some renewed proposal to send British officers into his country. He accepted the arms at once, because he had no such fear in respect to them. Under all these circumstances his dissatisfaction was not unnatural. But in spite of it all, in his letter of the 13th November the Ameer fell back with confidence on the written pledges which he held from Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. "The understanding arrived at in Umballa was quite sufficient"—a significant observation, which probably referred to the revival of the question about British officers. "As long as the beneficent British Government continued its friendship, we might be assured of his."*

The Viceroy's answer to this effusion, which was dated January 23rd, 1874, was the model of what such an answer ought to be, from a powerful Government to a semi-barbarous Sovereign, whose irritation

* Ibid., No. 28, Inclos. 1, p. 119.

was under the circumstances not unnatural,—whom it was inexpedient to offend, and undignified to bully Lord Northbrook expressed regret that the Ameer had not favoured him with an expression of his views on the proposals made in the Viceroy's former letter. Passing from this, he reminded Shere Ali that the assurances of support he had just given at Simla were "even more explicit than those contained in the auspicious writings of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo." He reproached the Ameer gently—not for refusing a passage through his dominions to the British officer for whom the leave had been asked, but—for the want of courtesy with which this refusal had been marked in the absence of any expression of regret. The letter concluded by a cordial sympathising assurance that the difficulties of his position in receiving guests in Afghanistan was fully understood, as well as the more important political anxieties by which he was beset.*

This letter drew from the Ameer a remarkable reply. It was dated the 10th of April, 1874. It was much more courteous in tone. It gave a reasonable excuse for objecting to the return of Mr. Forsyth from Yarkand through Afghanistan, on the ground that he was about to commence hostilities against his son Yakoob Khan. But the most important paragraph seems to be one in which he again refers to the cherished

* Ibid., No. 28, Inclos. 2, p. 120.

memories of Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo. It is evident that his fears and suspicions had been deeply stirred by the renewed discussion about the reception of British officers, even although the Government of India had carefully abstained from doing more than suggesting a mission in response to what seemed to be one of his own requirements. His language of appeal to the authority and to the promises of his old friends is almost passionate. "Your Excellency! Since Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo, especially the former, possessed an intimate knowledge of Afghanistan and its frontiers, and your Excellency must certainly have also acquired the same knowledge, I, therefore, am desirous that your Excellency, after full and careful consideration of the approval expressed by her Majesty the Queen, the 'Sunnud' of Lord Lawrence, and the decision of Lord Mayo, will remain firm and constant, in order that Afghanistan and its territories may be maintained inviolate and secure."*

About three months after the Simla Conferences Shere Ali at last announced to the Government of India that he had appointed Abdoolah Jan his Heir-apparent. He had come to this resolution, as of course he had a perfect right to do, without taking any counsel or advice from the British Government. Yet that Government knew that a decision which set aside Yakoob Khan, to whom the Ameer was mainly

* Ibid., No. 29, Inclos. 1, p. 123.

indebted for the recovery of his throne, was a decision which in all human probability doomed the country to another disputed succession, and to another bloody civil war. Lord Northbrook therefore sent a letter of acknowledgment, strictly confined to the language which had been used in 1858 in reply to Dost Mohammed, when he intimated the selection of Shere Ali in supercession of his elder brother.*

In November, 1874, the Viceroy had to make a communication to the Ameer which, though a real proof of friendship, could not fail to disturb him much. Shere Ali had invited his son Yakoob Khan to come under a "safe conduct" to Cabul: and when the Sirdar came, on the faith of the safe conduct, it had been violated, and he had been placed under arrest. It appeared to Lord Northbrook, as it had before appeared under less serious circumstances to Lord Mayo, that this was a matter on which it was right and necessary to express the friendly opinion of the head of the Indian Government. This opinion was communicated to the Ameer by our native Agent at Cabul. It urged upon him strongly to keep faith with his son, and added that by so doing he would maintain his own good name, and the friendship of the British Government.† Although this message from the Viceroy was afterwards referred to as having offended the

* Ibid., No. 27, p. 117.

† Ibid., No. 30, Inclos. 5, p. 126.

Ameer, he sent on the 14th December, 1874, through our Agent at Cabul, a civil answer, and acknowledged the advice given to him as dictated by "friendship and well-wishing."

In February, 1874, there was a change of Government at home. Subsequent to this date I have, of course, no personal knowledge of the course of Indian affairs. But as in the preceding narrative, subsequent to the Umballa Conference in 1869, I have relied exclusively on the papers presented to Parliament, or on papers equally authentic, so now for the period subsequent to February, 1874, I shall follow the indications of a change of policy as they are to be found there.

In the first place, then, it is to be observed that the present Government had been very nearly a year in office before any such indications were given. The Government came into office in February, 1874, and the first despatch of Lord Salisbury, desiring the Government of India to reopen the question of British officers as Political Agents in Afghanistan, was dated January 22nd, 1875.†

Before examining the terms of that despatch it is natural to look round us and see whether any, and if any, what events had happened during the year from February, 1874, to January 22, 1875.

---

* Ibid., No. 30A, Inclos. 2, p. 128.

† Ibid., No. 31, p. 128.

Just before the late Government left office, Lord Granville was called upon to reply to the Russian announcement of the Khivan Treaty. He did so in a despatch dated January 4, 1874. It recapitulated, in significant but friendly terms, the oft-repeated story of the Russian advances in Central Asia, acknowledged the good faith with which Russia had acted on the Agreement about Afghanistan since it had been concluded, set forth that the Ameer had equally acted on our advice in restraining Turkomans, and intimated that Shere Ali was then again disturbed by rumours of a Russian expedition against Merve. Lord Granville then repeated the declaration that we looked upon the independence of Afghanistan as a matter of great importance to the security of British India, and to the tranquillity of Asia. If Russia, by any new expedition, were to drive the Turkomans into the Ameer's dominions, he might labour under a double hardship, first in the disturbance of his dominions, and secondly in being held responsible for the control of those wild tribes.*

To this the Russian Government replied on the 21st of January, 1874, that they remained as faithful as ever to the old Agreement. It repeated the assurance that the Imperial Cabinet "continued to consider Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action." But here the Russian Cabinet stopped. They would

* Russia, II. 1874, No 2, pp. 6, 9.

not import into that Agreement a new and a different line of limitation than that of the Afghan frontier. This was what they had agreed to, and by this they would abide. They declared, indeed, that Shere Ali's fear of an expedition against Merve was groundless, inasmuch as they "had no intention of undertaking an expedition against the Turkomans." But, warned apparently by accusations of bad faith, founded on the assumption that intimations of intention or denials of intention, are equivalent to pledges, Prince Gortchakow, in this despatch, took care to add that he spoke of nothing but a simple intention. "It depended entirely on them (the Turkomans) to live on good terms with us . . . . but if these turbulent tribes were to take to attacking or plundering us, we should be compelled to punish them. Russia would rely on the Ameer to warn the Turkomans not to expect protection from him, and she would rely also on the influence of the English Government to give him effective advice upon the subject."* There was at least no deception in this despatch. Russia kept her freedom. Her Agreement had regard to Afghanistan, and not to anything beyond it. It concluded by saying that the "two Governments had an equal interest in not allowing their good relations to be disturbed by the intrigues of Asiatic Khans, and that so long as they

* Ibid., No. 3, pp. 10, 11.

both acted together with a feeling of mutual confidence and good will, the tranquillity of Central Asia would be sufficiently guaranteed."

Such was the condition of things when the present Government came into office. It was a condition of things in which Russia had given ample notice, that while she held by the engagement with us on the subject of Afghanistan, she would not extend it to any part of Central Asia outside that Kingdom, and in particular, that she held herself free to deal, as occasion might require, with the predatory Turkomans, whether in Merve or elsewhere. In March, 1874, however, Prince Gortchakow directed Baron Brünow to assure Lord Derby that the Emperor had given positive orders to stop any expedition against the Turkomans in the direction of Merve. This was expressly said in connexion with the approaching visit of the Emperor to England, and appears to have been a sort of condescension to a national weakness, "so that no cloud might be on the political horizon during his august master's visit to London."* In June, 1874, the Russian Government had its turn of asking us whether certain reports were true of our giving aid to the ruler of Yarkand, and this was categorically denied by the Viceroy.

Nevertheless, at this very time, the vigilance of our diplomatists had discovered a fresh cause of

* Central Asia, I., 1878, No. 9, p. 12.

anxiety in the reported proceedings of a General Llamakin, who was the newly-appointed Governor of the Russian Provinces on the Caspian (Krasnovodsk). On the 23rd of June, 1874, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg had heard that this functionary had addressed a Circular Letter to the Turkoman tribes of the Attrek and Goorgan Rivers, giving them warnings and advice. An account of this letter had appeared in the *Times* of the 17th of June, which pointed out that the Turkomans thus addressed were tribes which "nomadised" between the Caspian and the fort of Karis, "the latter being half-way to Merve." The same account mentioned as a fact that several Russian caravans had been recently plundered by the Turkomans of Merve, and that a Russian soldier was kept in captivity there. The despatch from Lord Augustus Loftus reporting the explanations given to him on these matters, was dated the 23rd, and was received in London on the 29th of June.* No anxiety, however, seems to have been expressed upon the subject, either by the Foreign Office or by the India Office. A month later, on the 2nd of August, a copy of the Circular Letter of General Llamakin was received at the Foreign Office from our Envoy at the Court of Persia.† He explained that he was informed on good authority that this Circular had been addressed to the whole of the

* Ibid., No. 18, p. 18. † Ibid., No. 20, p. 19.

Turkoman tribes occupying the line of country between the Caspian, Merve, and Charjui on the Oxus. The Circular itself does not say so, but as the roving tribes of those regions have no fixed limits to their wanderings, it was probable that it was addressed to "all whom it might concern." Expressly, however, it seems to be addressed to the Turkomans on "the Attrek and Goorgan," this being the area over which the General intimated that he had "supreme authority." It was simply an elaborate warning against the plundering of caravans, an exhortation to peace, and a recommendation of the benefits of commerce. It implies, indeed, throughout, the assertion of supremacy, and of the power and will to enforce obedience.

Again, no notice was taken of this more definite information either by the Foreign Secretary or the Indian Secretary of State. It does not seem to have occurred to either of them that the Circular of General Llamakin could form the subject of remonstrance or even of inquiry. It was not until it had gone round by way of Calcutta that anything appears to have occurred to anybody on the subject. But the Indian Government, habitually wakeful and susceptible on Central Asian politics, took alarm. On the 8th of September, Lord Northbrook wrote a despatch to Lord Salisbury, pointing out that if the Circular sent by Mr. Thomson, from Teheran, were genuine, "the Persian territory between the Attyek and the Goorgan

is now practically annexed to the Russian dominions, and authority is assumed in respect to the whole Turkoman country to the borders of Afghanistan." The Government of India added—"We are of opinion that these proceedings cannot fail to excite uneasiness and alarm in the minds of our Persian and Afghan allies, and that they demand the serious attention of her Majesty's Government."*

This despatch from Lord Northbrook did not reach London till the 30th of October, and was at once formally referred to the Foreign Office "for the information and consideration of Lord Derby."

The Foreign Secretary was then awakened to the fact, of which no previous notice had been taken, that the Circular of General Llamakin, in styling himself "Commander of the Turkoman tribes of the Attrek and the Goorgan," involved an assumption of Russian Sovereignty over a country which had always been considered to belong to Persia. If this was so, it ought not to have been left to Lord Northbrook to point it out. It was no matter of rumour, or of constructive inference. It was on the face of the document. Yet it was not until it had been three months in possession of the Foreign Office, and not until the Government of India had fastened on the point, that the Government awoke to it as a fact of any significance whatever. It was only on

* Ibid., No. 21, p. 20.

the 6th of November, that Lord Derby directed Lord Augustus Loftus to point out to the Russian Chancellor that the "territory between the Attrek and the Goorgan was unquestionably Persian territory, in which General Llamakin would not be justified in interfering." Finally, he was instructed to "express a hope that the Government of the Emperor would impress upon General Llamakin the expediency of abstaining from molesting the tribes who frequent the country to the south of the Attrek."*

When this despatch reached St. Petersburg, on the 14th December, 1874, it led to a little sparring between the British Ambassador and M. de Westmann, who was the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in the absence of Prince Gortchakow. M. de Westmann very naturally observed, that if Russia had done any wrong to Persia it was the business of Persia, and not of England, to complain. He did not refuse to explain that there had been a correspondence between the Imperial Persian Government on the subject, and that the explanations offered by Russia had been perfectly satisfactory to the Shah. Nor did M. de Westmann deny that the Circular of General Llamakin had given to the tribes he addressed a name or description which was liable to misapprehension. But he gave the not unreasonable explanation that the Turkoman tribes referred to, though they might generally inhabit

* Ibid., No. 22, p. 20.

territories which were Persian, were also in the habit of dwelling for a part of the year in territories which were Russian. He repeated, however, that although he gave these explanations, "it was not customary to interfere in the international relations of two independent States." To this Lord Augustus Loftus replied that the interests of the neighbouring States were more or less mixed up with those of our Indian Empire, and both Persia and Afghanistan might be considered as "limitrophe States to India." He added, "that the integrity of Persian territory had been the subject of a formal understanding and agreement between England and Russia in 1835 and 1838." M. de Westmann rejoined that this understanding had reference to the succession to the Persian throne, a subject on which he hoped the two Governments would always be able to come to a common understanding. But the incident now referred to by the British Ambassador was one affecting Persia alone, in which he could not admit the right of a third party to interfere. All this, however, was reported by our Ambassador as having been said in the most courteous and conciliatory manner.* Lord Derby replied to it by desiring Lord Augustus to point out to M. de Westmann that he was mistaken in saying that the agreement, in 1835 and 1838, referred only to the succession

* Ibid., No. 23, p. 21–2.

to the Persian throne,* and on this representation being made, M. de Westmann at once said that he had not meant to deny the validity of that understanding at the present moment. He denied, however, that the integrity of Persia had been menaced by General Llamakin's Circular any more than it had been menaced by the Seistan Arbitration—a matter which concerned Persian territory, but on which England had made no communication whatever to the Government of Russia.†

I have given this episode somewhat at length, because we shall see some reason to believe that the Proclamation of General Llamakin to the Turcoman Tribes "between the Attrek and the Goorgan" was one of the circumstances which started the Government on its new line of policy in India, and because it explains the condition of things down to the end of the year 1874—the last despatch of our Ambassador concerning it having been dated December 23rd in that year. It contains a record of transactions which prove that the Government at home had no need to call the attention of the Indian Viceroy to any part of the Central Asian question. Lord Northbrook and his Council had shown himself far more wakeful than either the Foreign or the Indian Secretary of State, and had exercised a vigilance in respect to the most distant frontiers of Persia, which did not appear in the despatches even of our Envoy at Teheran.

* Ibid., No. 24, p. 22. † Ibid., No. 25, p. 23.

It was towards the end of these occurrences that an important event happened. Sir Bartle Frere wrote a Note. It was dated the 11th of January, 1875, and as it has since been published by the Government in the *Times* of November 14, 1878, in anticipation of the late session of Parliament, it cannot be doubted that it represents, to a considerable extent at least, the arguments which had weight with the Cabinet in the action which we are now about to trace. The Rawlinson Memorandum, written in a similar sense, which had been drawn up in 1868, had not, as we have seen, induced my predecessor, Sir Stafford Northcote, to change his course,—notwithstanding the then recent conquest of Bokhara, and the occupation of Samarkand. But the new Note by Sir Bartle Frere fell upon a mind at once more receptive and more impetuous, and it must be regarded as the beginning of all that followed. It had been preceded by a letter from the same distinguished member of the Indian Council, which was written in May, 1874, and was addressed to Sir J. Kaye, the Secretary of the Foreign Department in the India Office. This letter had recommended the occupation of Quetta, and the establishment of British officers at Herat, Balkh, and Candahar. In reply to this letter a Memorandum had been written by Lord Lawrence, dated November 4, 1874. The Note, therefore, by Sir Bartle Frere, dated January 11, 1875, is to be

regarded in the light of, and has all the marks of being, a controversial reply to Lord Lawrence, and an elaborate defence of his own opinion. It is remarkable that none of these papers—to one of which the Government evidently attaches so much importance—were ever communicated to the Government of India. It is evident from the dates that the Note of Sir Bartle Frere cannot have been communicated even privately to the Viceroy before action was taken in the sense it recommended. This is not surprising. When Secretaries of State take to acting under the inspiration of others, who are not in a responsible position, they do not always like the sources of that inspiration to be known.*

It is one of the advantages of the Indian Council that the members of it are generally men of very different views, who are accustomed to contest each other's opinions, sometimes with the utmost keenness, and very often with the most varied knowledge. Thus the Secretary of State may always hear every question of importance thoroughly sifted; whilst, on the other hand, it is never or very rarely safe to accept without careful examination either the facts or arguments which are put forward in such controversies by individual men. It has always been the favourite device of Parliamentary tacticians, when Indian questions

* I have taken these facts concerning the Papers referred to, principally from the explanatory paragraph in the *Times* of November 14th, 1878.

happen to become the subject of party contention, to quote as conclusive on their side the opinions and arguments of some very able and distinguished man,—concealing altogether the fact that these opinions and arguments had been successfully traversed by others quite equal, or perhaps superior, in weight of metal. This was the method pursued, I recollect, a good many years ago, by the present Prime Minister, in a famous attack he made on the administration of the Marquis of Dalhousie.

Considering, then, the importance which evidently attaches to Sir Bartle Frere's Note of the 11th January, 1875, not only on account of the eminent abilities and many accomplishments of its distinguished author, but also on account of the effect it seems to have produced, it may be well to indicate here some of the statements and arguments it contains.

The first characteristic which strikes me is the elaborate endeavour which this Note makes to establish a great distinction between the policy of Lord Lawrence and the policy of Lord Mayo in respect to Afghanistan. I have shown in the previous narrative that there was no such distinction. Lord Mayo always represented himself as having acted strictly on the lines of policy laid down by his predecessor. The Umballa Conference itself was in pursuance of that policy. All that was said and done there, and, moreover, all that Lord Mayo carefully

avoided saying and doing, was strictly in pursuance of the same policy. The money and arms which Lord Mayo gave to the Ameer was either in implement or in supplement of the assistance which had been given or promised by Lord Lawrence. The assurances for the future were confined within the same general limits of principle which had been traced by Lord Lawrence. There is not the shadow of ground for establishing the distinction which Sir Bartle Frere endeavours to establish, still less for the contrast to which he points. Sir Bartle is quite mistaken when he says that "Shere Ali and all the Afghans are among those who have shared his opinion" in the matter. We have seen that Shere Ali rarely failed to couple the names of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo together as those of two great and equal friends. We have seen that in the very latest communication to the Government of India, when he was trembling under communications which he erroneously interpreted as indications of a change of policy, he not only made an earnest appeal to those joint names, but he singled out Lord Lawrence as his special benefactor, and as the Viceroy from whom he held a "Sunnud" of the highest value.

This mistake of Sir Bartle Frere is not accidental. It arises from a fundamental misapprehension of the principle of Lord Lawrence's policy, and from a kind of misapprehension concerning it which is one of the commonest fruits of political controversy. In order

to combat our opponent's policy, we are very apt, first, to caricature it. Lord Lawrence's policy has been in this way absurdly caricatured. It never was a policy of absolute or unconditional abstention in Afghanistan. It was not this even in internal affairs; still less was it this in external relations. He began his assistance to Shere Ali before the civil war had been absolutely decided; and Sir Henry Rawlinson, as we have seen, has actually represented this as a departure by Lord Lawrence from his own policy. It was not so, as I have shown. It may have been a departure from the conception of that policy which had arisen in the minds of his opponents. But we must take Lord Lawrence's policy not from his opponents, but from himself. As regards the external relations of Afghanistan, it was a policy of abstention still more conditional. In the event of foreign interference in Afghanistan, Lord Lawrence not only never recommended abstention, but we have seen that he emphatically recommended resolute and immediate action.

It was my duty as Secretary of State for India during a period of five years, to form as clear and definite a conception as I could of the policy which Lord Mayo always declared to be his own, and the conception of it, which I have here indicated, was that on which Lord Mayo acted, and was prepared to act.

The next observation which occurs to me on Sir Bartle Frere's Note is, that he discusses the

principal measure he recommends—namely, the establishment of British officers in Afghanistan—without the slightest reference to the question whether it had or had not formed the subject of direct engagement with the Ameer, either by Treaties, or by the pledges and promises of Indian Viceroys. Not only does he omit all reference to this question, but he assumes on hearsay evidence, and, as I have shown, quite incorrectly, that the Ameer had expressed his willingness to receive such officers. He treats with ridicule, and even with indignation, one of the objections which Afghan Rulers have always put forward—namely, the difficulty of insuring the safety of such officers among a fanatical people. But, even supposing that this objection had been (what it certainly has not been) wholly ostensible, and only serving to cover the real ground of objection—namely, the fear entertained by the Ameer that he would soon cease to rule in his own Kingdom if British officers were permanently located there—Sir Bartle Frere does not deal satisfactorily with this fear. Indeed, by implication, he admits it to have much foundation. One of the two things which he says we ought especially to keep in view as the main objects of our action, is to impress the Afghans with a conviction that we have no desire "to interfere with their independence and self-government." He admits that this will require "much self-control and abstinence from unnecessary interference on the part of our representatives." It will, indeed; and no man who

considers the position of British officers in contact with such a condition of political society as that presented by Afghanistan, can reasonably deny that the traditional fears of the Rulers of Cabul on this subject have a reasonable foundation.

The occupation of Quetta is recommended, to prevent its falling into the hands of any other Power. But as there was then as little possibility of this as there is now, Sir Bartle Frere is obliged to argue it as part of a much larger plan—namely, that of our meeting Russia on the western frontiers of Afghanistan—a necessity which, indeed, no Anglo-Indian politician can exclude from his view as a possible contingency, but which, on the other hand, considering all the consequences it must involve, no wise man would willingly precipitate. This formidable proposal of "meeting Russia on the western frontier of Afghanistan" is the principle of the whole argument. It points to a course of conduct which could not be pursued without a breach of faith. But this is never mentioned. It is a course which could not be pursued without military expenditure on the largest scale. Yet the Note gravely maintains that only when this course has been conducted to its conclusion, can we hope for Peace Establishments in India. Propositions which seem so careless in respect to our Treaty obligations, and rash and so extravagant in respect to policy—are the basis of the Paper on which the new Policy was founded.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM JANUARY, 1875, TO THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876.

IT was only eleven days after the date of this Note—on the 22nd of January, 1875—that Lord Salisbury addressed his first despatch* to the Government of India, directing the Viceroy to take measures with as much expedition as the circumstances of the case permitted, for procuring the assent of the Ameer to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat. When this was accomplished, it might be desirable to take a similar step with regard to Candahar. With respect to Cabul itself, the Secretary of State did not suggest any similar step, as he "was sensible of the difficulties interposed by the fanatic violence of the people." The reasons for this instruction are calmly and temperately stated in the despatch, these reasons being principally connected with the acknowledged importance of having accurate information from the western frontiers of Afghanistan. It was admitted that "no immediate danger appeared to threaten the

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 31, p. 128.

interests of her Majesty in the regions of Central Asia." But "the aspect of affairs was sufficiently grave to inspire solicitude, and to suggest the necessity of timely precaution." The effect of the Llamakin Proclamation seems to be indicated in the opening sentence, which intimated that "Her Majesty's Government had followed with anxious attention the progress of events in Central Asia, and on the frontiers of Persia and Afghanistan."

There are two very remarkable circumstances to be observed about this despatch. The first is that, although written some eighteen months after Lord Northbrook's Conferences with the Envoy of Shere Ali, at Simla, it indicates no symptom whatever of the opinion that the Viceroy had on that occasion taken an impolitic course towards the Ameer, or had failed to give him anything that could have been safely offered. On the contrary, the whole object of the despatch is to endeavour to force upon the Ameer a proposal of which he was known to be extremely jealous, whilst it did not instruct Lord Northbrook, or even authorise him, to offer any concession whatever in return. If it were true that the Ameer was then sulky or estranged, this was not a very conciliatory, or even a just method of dealing with him. The only excuse for Lord Salisbury is to suppose that at that time it had not occurred to him that any conciliation of the Ameer was required, or that Lord Northbrook's course eighteen months before had given to Shere Ali any

just cause of complaint. This circumstance is a sufficient comment on the candour and the fairness of the attempts lately made by the Government to ascribe to the policy of Lord Northbrook the results produced by the new policy inaugurated by themselves.

The next circumstance observable about this despatch is that, like Sir Bartle Frere's Note, it makes no allusion whatever to the engagements of the Indian Government with the Ameer on the subject of British officers resident in his dominions. This was excusable on the part of Sir Bartle Frere, who did not know all the facts. I venture to think it was a grave and culpable omission on the part of a Secretary of State for India, who ought to have known the engagements by which it was his duty to abide. Not only does the despatch make no allusion to Treaties or pledges on this subject, but it dwells on the loose private gossip which reported the Ameer as having been willing to admit an Agent at Herat; and it makes the still more serious assumption that, "if his intentions were still loyal, it was not possible that he would make any serious difficulty now."*

After the facts which I have narrated in the previous pages, it is needless to produce any farther proof that this despatch was written either in unaccountable

* Ibid., p. 129, para. 6.

forgetfulness, or in more unaccountable disregard, of the plighted faith of the Government of the Queen.

The only indication in the despatch that the Secretary of State at all bore in mind the honourable obligations in this matter under which we lay, is that he did instruct the Viceroy to procure the Ameer's consent. It may be well, therefore, to point out here what this really involved. It is, of course, true that it would be no breach of our engagement with the Ameer, to send British Agents to his country if it could be done with his free consent. But the whole essence of Lord Mayo's promise lay in the pledge that we were not to force that consent by the undue pressure which a powerful Government can put upon a weak one. In the case of two Powers perfectly equal making such an agreement between themselves, it might be always legitimate for either of them to try to persuade the other to abandon the agreement, and to make some other arrangement in its stead. Nor do I deny that it might be perfectly legitimate for the Government of India to sound the disposition of the Ameer from time to time, and to try by gentle means to ascertain whether he could not be persuaded, freely and willingly, to let us off from the promises we had made. This had just been done by Lord Northbrook when he proposed to send an officer to examine the frontier, and to seek an interview with the Ameer at Cabul. The result was to prove that Shere Ali retained

all his dread and all his suspicion of the consequences of any change. It was for the very purpose of leaving the Ameer in perfect freedom to act upon his feelings and opinions in this matter—to make him feel comfortable in regard to it—that Lord Mayo had given him the pledge at Umballa. No such freedom could be left to him if the powerful Government of India were to press him unduly to yield upon the subject. The application of such pressure was, therefore, in itself a departure from the understanding; and to visit a refusal on the part of the Ameer with resentment or with penal consequences of any kind, was the distinct violation of a promise, and a direct breach of faith.

The other circumstance connected with this despatch which deserves notice is the curious Departmental jealousy which the second paragraph incidentally displays of the Foreign Office. After noticing the scantiness of the information which it was in the power of the Viceroy to supply, the paragraph in question proceeds thus:—"For knowledge of what passes in Afghanistan, and upon its frontiers, they (her Majesty's advisers) are compelled to rely mainly upon the indirect intelligence which reaches them through the Foreign Office."

This passage is connected with a very important part of the whole subject, which has not been sufficiently attended to. The observation of Lord Salisbury seems to have been immediately suggested by

the circumstance which has been just narrated, namely, that the information in respect to General Llamakin's proclamation to the Turkomans, and his reported movements on the Attrek, had come from our Mission at Teheran, reporting, as that Mission does, not to the India Office, but to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.* It has, however, been a favourite doctrine at the India Office, that the Persian Mission ought to be now, as it once was, in direct communication with that Office—that it ought to represent the Government of India, and be officered and directed from Calcutta. An emphatic recommendation that we should return to this arrangement was a prominent feature of the advice urged upon the Government in 1868 in the Rawlinson Memorandum of that year. During the time I was at the India Office I have heard the question frequently discussed, and although there are undoubtedly some arguments in favour of the Departmental view, I never could agree with my colleagues who supported it. Teheran is the Capital where Indian and European politics meet. But the centre of interest is European. Even as regards Indian questions, the methods of operating upon them in Persia, are essentially connected with the main cur-

* I believe that, strictly speaking, the Persian Mission reports both to the Home Government and to the Government of India, duplicate despatches being sent to Calcutta.

rents of European diplomacy. I am informed by my relative, Sir John McNeill, who for many years occupied with distinguished ability the post of British Envoy in Persia, that in the disastrous year of the first Afghan war, he felt very strongly that he never could have maintained the influence of England against Russia, if he had been in the position at Teheran of representing merely the Indian Government, and of not directly representing the Queen. It is, of course, true that the Government of India is, and always has been in political matters, the Government of the Queen. But the question depends not on what we know to be the fact, but on what foreign Governments understand to be the fact. There can be no doubt on this — that at any Court, but especially at such a Court as that of Persia, the British Representative would lose in authority and in influence if he were not understood to be the direct representative of the British Sovereign.

This, however, is only part of the question which is suggested rather than raised by the paragraph in Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 22nd of January, 1875, in which he refers to the "indirectness" of the information coming through the Foreign Office. That passage does not necessarily indicate any opinion on the constitution of the Persian Mission adverse to that which I have now expressed. But it does indicate an opinion on the importance and value of the information upon Central Asian politics which is to be derived

through our intercourse with Persia, which has a direct and a very important bearing on the new policy which was about to be pursued towards the unfortunate Ameer. Although I do not agree with Sir Henry Rawlinson that the Persian Mission should represent directly the Government of India, I do most thoroughly agree with him that it ought to be, and that, geographically, it is specially fitted to be, the main source of our information on that branch of Central Asian politics which excites most alarm in the Anglo-Indian mind. The point on which that mind is fixed with special anxiety is Merve, and the affection which the very mention of that word produces is so peculiar, that it almost deserves a special name, and may be called "Mervousness." Now what is Merve, and where is it? It is a wretched village, or at the best a very small and poor town of Turkoman mud huts, undefended, or, if not wholly so, at least defended only by mud walls. It is a nest of robbers. This seems to be admitted on all hands, and the principal circumstance which gives rise to any anxiety about it, is that its inhabitants are always plundering some Russian caravan, or kidnapping some Russian subjects. Geographically, its importance is represented to be that it is not in a desert, but in a tract of country well watered, and more or less cultivated; and that the country intervening between it and Herat, the frontier province of Afghanistan, is of a similar character. The argument is, that if Russia were once established in

Merve, there would be no physical impediment to the march of an army upon Herat. It is one thing, however, for Russia to send a force capable of taking Merve, and a very different thing for Russia either to collect at Merve, or to march from Merve, a force capable of taking Herat—which is a place defended by the strongest walls of earthwork which exist anywhere in the world. Sir Henry Rawlinson describes them as "stupendous." It is stated on the same high authority that even Merve, if it were defended by a concentration of the Turkoman tribes, could not safely be attacked by a smaller force than 20,000 men, whilst an assault on Herat would require not less than 40,000.* Putting aside, however, all these considerations, which after all can only abate our "Mervousness" a little, the point on which I wish to dwell now is that Merve is within about fifty miles of the Persian frontier, and not more than about 150 miles from the Persian City of Meshed, at which we have an Agent of our Persian Mission. Meshed is much nearer to Herat than Merve, and an active British Agency at that important Persian town would command the earliest and most complete information on every possible Russian movement even upon Merve, and still more easily upon every preparation made there for a further movement upon Herat. Most of the information forwarded by our Envoy at Teheran on the sub-

* *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1879, p. 255.

ject of movements in Central Asia has been information procured by our Agent at Meshed. The whole line of advance which is feared on the part of Russia, from the Caspian up the valley of the Attrek river, and beyond it in the direction of Merve, is a line of advance parallel with the Persian frontier, along the whole length of the province of Khorassan. It is in the country of tribes which have more or less direct relations with the Persian Government. This was the reason, and an excellent reason it is, why the information touching General Llamakin's proceedings, which aroused Lord Northbrook, but did not arouse Lord Salisbury till the Viceroy had shaken him on the subject, was information procured from our Envoy at Teheran. Sir Henry Rawlinson, in his article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1878, has informed us that a Russian expedition of any formidable strength, attempting to approach the western frontiers of Afghanistan along this line of country, would be dependent for the enormous amount of carriage requisite for the purpose, upon Persian sources of supply. We have it, therefore, as a certainty arising out of geographical facts, and admitted by the highest authority, that the danger of such a proceeding on the part of Russia, is a danger in respect to which we ought always to receive the earliest information from an efficient British Agency in Persia. Such an Agency ought to get, and certainly would get, information of Russian preparations on the Caspian, and of Russian move-

ments from that region, long before any such information could reach a British officer stationed in Herat. Indeed, it is most probable that the rumours reaching an officer in that city would be altogether unworthy of trust, or could only be verified by careful inquiry through our Agents in Persia.

The result of these considerations is to show that whilst Lord Salisbury was now beginning to urge upon the Viceroy a course towards the Ameer which involved a breach of Treaty engagements, and a breach of Lord Mayo's solemn promises, and whilst he was doing so for the sake of a comparatively small advantage, he was at the same time overlooking or treating in the spirit of mere departmental jealousy, another course not connected with any difficulty, or involving any risks, by which the same objects could be, and were actually being, much more effectually obtained. A well-organised system of intelligence in respect to events in Central Asia in connexion with our Missions and Agencies in Persia would enable us to watch every movement of Russia in the direction of Merve, and would be exposed to none of the dangers and objections attending a breach of Lord Mayo's engagements to the Ameer.

There is yet another circumstance connected with this despatch of the 22nd of January, 1875, on which it is necessary to observe. As a justification of the new policy about to be pursued it became a great object with the Indian Secretary to make out that

our native Agency at Cabul was nearly useless. Accordingly in this first despatch and in others that follow, we have this point much laboured, and, as usual, the evidence of the Indian Government on the subject not very fairly quoted. Our native Agent at Cabul was Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, a Mahomedan gentleman "of rank and character," appointed by Lord Lawrence in 1867, as one in "whose fidelity and discretion" he had "full confidence."* We have seen that this Agent, or his Moonshee, had been admitted to hear discussions in the Durbar of Shere Ali, and had repeatedly conveyed the most valuable and authentic accounts of the feelings and dispositions of the Cabul Government. But it now suited the policy of the Government, and was indeed a necessary part of it, to disparage this Agency as compared with that which it was desired to establish. The truth on this matter is not very far to seek. There are certain purposes for which a native Agent, however faithful, is of no use. If it is authority that we wish to exercise, we can only do it through a British officer. Even if it be the commanding influence which is tantamount to authority that we wish to have, we can only have it by employing a European officer. In short, if we want to domineer we must have an Agent of our own race. And it is precisely for this reason that the Rulers of

* Afghan Corresp., I. 1878, p. 14.

Cabul have always objected to such an Agent. But, on the other hand, if we want simply to gain information through an Agent who is at once faithful to us, and at the same time in sympathy with the Court to which he is sent, then a Mahomedan gentleman, such as Atta Mohammed, is not only as good as, but better than a European. It is inconceivable that a British officer would ever be allowed to be present at Durbars as our native Agent seems to have been. The evidence is indeed conclusive that Atta Mohammed has reported to us the truth, with just that degree of sympathy with the Court to which he was accredited, which, if we were sincere, it was most desirable that he should possess.

The despatch of the 22nd Jan., 1875, seems to have given infinite trouble to the Government of India. There was no difficulty in answering it, but very great difficulty in answering it with that respect which is due to official superiors. It would have been easy to point out that it made no reference whatever to Treaties and pledges which the Government of India was bound to respect,—that it alleged certain things to have been said by the Ameer which, even if they had been said, had nothing to do with the agreement ultimately arrived at,—that it made this allegation on evidence which was not quoted, whilst authentic records were left unnoticed,—that it made the unjust and very unreasonable assumption that if the Ameer desired to claim the

protection of Lord Mayo's promises he could not possibly be loyal in his intentions to Lord Mayo's successors in office,—all this it would have been easy to point out. But, in the meantime, what seemed to be a positive order must be either obeyed or disobeyed. Under these circumstances Lord Northbrook telegraphed to the Secretary of State on the 18th of February, that in the judgment of the Government of India it was inexpedient to take the initiative at that time in the matter referred to—that nothing was traceable in the records at Calcutta showing that the Ameer had ever expressed his readiness to receive a British Agent at Herat, and that he might object to such an arrangement without being at all disloyal in his intentions towards the British Government. Lord Northbrook, therefore, asked whether Lord Salisbury's direction was peremptory, or whether a discretion was intended to be left to the Government of India.* On the 23rd of February, 1875, Lord Salisbury replied that a delay of three or four months would be within the discretion contemplated by her Majesty's Government, and the Viceroy was referred to three officers in India for the truth of the reports as to what the Ameer had been heard to say. They were now scattered in different parts of India and beyond it—one of them, Mr. Girdlestone, being Resident in Nepal. The other two were Sir Richard Pollock,

* Ibid., No. 32, para. 4, p. 129.

Commissioner of Peshawur, and Mr. Thornton, Secretary to the Governor of the Punjaub. But, strange to say, Lord Salisbury does not seem to have made any inquiry of Mr. Seton Karr, who was then in England, and who, as Foreign Secretary to the Government of India under Lord Mayo, was of all men most competent to give trustworthy evidence on the subject. His evidence has been given since, under a sense of what he owed "to truth," and to the memory of the Viceroy under whom he served in 1869. It is characteristic of the spirit in which the matter has been pursued that on account of this evidence he was censured by an Under-Secretary of State in the late debates in the House of Commons, and was represented by that official as having been too imperfectly acquainted with the Native languages to be accurately informed. Mr. Seton Karr has had no difficulty in exposing this attempt to suppress or damage truthful but unwelcome testimony.

The information on which Lord Salisbury was acting was not confirmed even by the officers to whom he expressly referred.

That information mainly rested on a note written by Mr. Girdlestone on the 26th of March, 1869, purporting to report what he had heard "in conversation with Punjaub officials." But on being asked by Lord Northbrook to give some more definite information as to the sources of his impression, that officer very frankly confessed that he had really none to give.

Mr. Girdlestone did not hear the Ameer say one word upon the subject. His memory even failed to recall with certainty the authority from which he had derived an impression that Shere Ali had expressed himself to the effect supposed. His recollection, however, was that the information given to him had come "either from Major Pollock, or Mr. Thornton." The "only other Punjaub official" whom he could specify was Colonel Reynell Taylor, who was Commissioner of Umballa in 1869.*

Let us now see what was said by the other two officers named by Lord Salisbury.

As regarded the present time, Sir R. Pollock was convinced that the Ameer would not willingly consent to receive British officers as Residents in his Kingdom; and that "as regarded the past, it was well known to Government that the strongest objection has hitherto existed" to any such arrangement.†

Mr. Thornton said that he was not himself at any of the Conferences between Lord Mayo and the Ameer in 1869, and could not consequently speak from personal knowledge of what passed on those occasions. Of Shere Ali's feelings at the present time Mr. Thornton had no doubt. He believed the deputation of European officers into Afghanistan to be highly distasteful to the Ameer and his Councillors. As

---

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 2, 3, p. 136.
† Ibid., Inclos. 5, p. 137.

regarded the past, he could give no other evidence than that of a certain mysterious personage, designated as "X. Y.," who is explained to have been an Afghan, and who, in the secret records of the "Persian Office," was said to have reported the substance of certain conversations of the Ameer, not at Umballa, but before the Conferences, when he was at Cabul and at Lahore. What makes this mysterious "X. Y." still more mysterious is that he undertook to report private discussions which are expressly stated to have been held between the Ameer and his Minister, Noor Mohammed, "at which no third person was present."* This is one of the great privileges of the writers of fiction. Whether it be of ministers in the most secret conclave, or of conspirators in the darkest den, or only of lovers

> "Sitting in a pleasant shade,
> Which a grove of myrtles made,"

the novelist has an equal privilege of reporting all that is said. And, stranger still, such is the power of their craft, that it never occurs to any of us to be surprised by the superhuman knowledge they display. It is, however, somewhat new to find grave Secretaries of State opening their ears to this kind of fiction, and preferring it to the evidence both of written documents and of men telling us what they

---

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. II, p. 143.

knew. Of this more authentic kind of evidence Lord Northbrook's inquiries elicited abundance. For example, General Taylor, Secretary to the Government of the Punjaub, an officer who had exceptional means of information, not only reported his own opinion that the Ameer would not be willing to consent to the proposed measure, and that for many reasons it would not be just to blame him,—but as regarded the past, he reported it to be well known that the Ameer and his advisers had more than once embodied their feelings and their opinions on the subject in the very strong expression, "Do anything but force British officers on us."*

The result, then, of Lord Northbrook's inquiries was to leave nothing whatever in support of the gossip on which Lord Salisbury had proceeded, except the Note and the private Memorandum Book of Captain Grey, the value of which has been already analysed in a previous page.

Having ascertained all this, having gathered the nearly unanimous opinion of all its ablest and most experienced officers on the frontier, and having duly considered and re-considered the formal obligations under which it lay, the Government of India, on the 7th of June, 1875, addressed to the Government at Home a despatch setting forth in detail all the arguments upon which it had come to the decided opinion,

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 6, p. 139.

that there was no evidence of the alleged former willingness of the Ameer to receive European officers, sufficient to justify them in founding upon it any new representation on the subject; and that on all other grounds it would not be wise or politic to make the proposal. Lord Northbrook and the Council denied that the reluctance of the Ameer to accept it could be fairly interpreted as indicative of disloyal intentions against the British Government. They referred to the fact that without the same special reasons and historical causes the same feeling had always been expressed by the Ruler of Cashmere. They explained that Sir Richard Pollock, who was intimately acquainted with Noor Mohammed, and had confidential information on the real sentiments of the Ameer, was convinced that Shere Ali had no inclination whatever to look for help elsewhere than to the British Government. They pointed out that, though he had been displeased at not having got all he wanted in 1873, he had nevertheless acted on our advice, although most reluctantly, in accepting the Seistan arbitration. They recalled to the mind of the Secretary of State the recorded and specific assurances given to the Ameer by Lord Mayo at Umballa; they suggested that a change of policy on our part in this matter might throw Afghanistan into the arms of Russia on the first favourable opportunity. They admitted that the presence of a British Agent at Herat would be in itself desirable: and they emphatically

explained that if the threatened movement of Russia upon Merve did actually take place, or even if Russia assumed authority over the whole Turkoman country, they would then deem it necessary to make some new arrangement, and to give additional and more specific assurances to the Ruler of Afghanistan against attack from without; they indicated their opinion that this new arrangement should probably take the form of a new Treaty, and that then the establishment of a British officer at Herat might naturally be brought about. In the meantime, they recommended a steady adherence to the patient and conciliatory policy which had been pursued for many years towards Afghanistan, and that every reasonable allowance should be made for the difficulties of the Ameer.*

The Government at home did not reply to this despatch until the 19th of November, 1875. By this time the Eastern Question had risen above the horizon in its European aspects. The insurrection, as we have seen, had begun in Bosnia and the Herzegovina in the month of July.† On the 18th of August a dim vision of the "Three Emperors" had appeared in the common action of their Ambassadors at Constantinople. They were actually seen consulting together for the purpose of interfering with Turkey, and of sending out the Consular Mission.‡

---

* Ibid., No. 32, p. 129–135. † *Ante*, Chap. IV. Vol. I. p. 131.
‡ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

On the 24th of August the Cabinet had been dragged by the force of circumstances, but most reluctantly, to join in this first step taken by the other Powers of Europe. In October it had become apparent that the insurrection was of a most serious character—that the Porte was greatly alarmed —that it was making profuse explanations and promises of reform—that these were being received with contempt by the insurgents, and by incredulity on the part of every Cabinet except that of London. In November it became known that Austria-Hungary was moving forward in the direction of intervention or of interference of some kind, and was in consultation with the Governments of Germany and of Russia. The jealousy and suspicion of the English Ministry had been aroused, and at the very time when Lord Salisbury was preparing his rejoinder to Lord Northbrook, his colleague at the Foreign Office was inditing the first despatch which intimated to our Ambassador at Vienna that the "gravity of the political situation had been undoubtedly aggravated" by the rumours that Austria-Hungary was concerting "some scheme in regard to the Herzegovina without consultation with the Powers, parties to the Treaty of 1856."* The despatch of Lord Derby was dated November 20th, that of Lord Salisbury was dated November 19th. Written in all probability without any direct connexion, they were nevertheless contemporary

* Ibid., p. 157.

events, and are alike illustrations of the atmosphere of opinion prevalent at the time.

To this atmosphere various breezes had contributed. As in 1874 Sir Bartle Frere had written a Note, so in 1875 Sir Henry Rawlinson had published a book —"England and Russia in the East." In this very interesting and important work, full of local knowledge, and marked by great powers of systematic statement, everything which had hitherto been said in private memoranda for official information, was published to the world. Coinciding with a time when the public mind was beginning to be excited against Russia on other grounds, it could not fail to have a considerable effect. And yet, like every other work full of solid information and of real ability, it ought not to have been without its calming influence if it had been studied and interpreted with care. Although representing Russia as a Power engaged in the attack of a fortress—which fortress was India—and advancing by "parallels" to the attack across the whole length and breadth of Central Asia from Orenburg to the Upper Oxus, it nevertheless set forth very fully not only the immense spaces she had yet to traverse, but the still more immense political and military preparations which she had yet to make. Especially in regard to the "parallel" which started from the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and was directed towards Herat, it showed how closely connected it was with the Persian frontier, and how any advance upon that line

must depend much on securing the goodwill and co-operation of the Persian Government.* So close was this connexion that the possible ultimate contingency was described to be—that Russia might, after having first taken Herat, launch from that base upon India a force of 50,000 men of Persian "Sirbaz," disciplined and commanded by Russian officers. Men disposed to be in a panic are neither able nor willing to estimate with any care either the time required or the number of steps to be taken before such a contingency as this could be brought about. The Government, in particular, never seem to have bestowed a thought upon the just importance which Sir Henry Rawlinson set upon the Persian Mission as the agency through which all possible Russian movements in that direction can be most effectually watched, and without the knowledge of which, if it is well organised, it is impossible that any movement towards the capture of such a place as Herat could be made without months, or perhaps even years of warning.†

The entire neglect of all modifying considerations of this kind is conspicuous in the Despatch

---

* Second Edition, p. 294.

† The Article in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1879, before referred to, sets forth even more distinctly than Sir Henry Rawlinson had previously done, the dependence upon Persian complicity and support, of any Russian advance upon Herat from the Caspian base.

of the 19th of November, 1875. The consequence was, that treating, as we have seen, all Foreign Office information as "indirect" and comparatively valueless to India, Lord Salisbury had come to attach a most exaggerated value to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat. Every conceivable cause of trouble was conjured up in support of the proposal to press on the Ameer his consent to the reception of a British officer there. The objection to it as a breach of engagement with him, and as highly offensive to him, and the danger of it as liable to throw him into the hands of Russia, are treated with silence or with contempt. The importance of it was argued in connexion with the fear that Russia might acquire by intrigue a dominant influence over the Ameer—with the fear that civil disturbances might arise and lead to the same result—with the fear that the Ameer himself might offend Russia by military expeditions on his frontier—with the fear, above all, of the permanent occupation by Russia of Merve. The Government of India had treated that occupation as a contingency which, if not necessarily distant, could not arise without warning, and which, if it did arise, must yet leave ample time for the British Government to take measures against any possible movement upon Herat. Lord Salisbury, on the contrary, treated it as if it might happen at any moment, and as if, when it did happen, the "time might have passed by when representations to the Ameer could be made with any

useful result." Shere Ali already knew that Samarkand was Russian, and that Bokhara was under Russia, so that he had Russia on his very borders. But if the mud village of Merve were ever to be occupied by the Russians, although it was 100 miles at least from his most distant frontier, then, indeed, he would conclude "that no Power exists which is able to stop their progress." Such is the fever-heat that had been attained under the influence of that condition of mind to which, as being something quite peculiar, and different from anything else, I have ventured to apply the word "Mervousness."

Accordingly, under the influence of these feelings, the Secretary of State, in his Despatch of the 19th of November, 1875, still insisted on his previous instructions, that measures should be taken to procure the assent of the Ameer to a British Mission at Herat. What these measures were to be, I think it safest to describe in the language of the Despatch itself:—

"The first step, therefore, in establishing our relations with the Ameer upon a more satisfactory footing, will be to induce him to receive a temporary Embassy in his capital. It need not be publicly connected with the establishment of a permanent Mission within his dominions. There would be many advantages in ostensibly directing it to some object of smaller political interest, which it will not be difficult for your Excellency to find, or, if need be, to create."*

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, No. 33, para. 15, p. 149.

The Viceroy was, therefore, instructed to find some occasion for sending a Mission to Cabul, and to "press the reception of this Mission very earnestly upon the Ameer." The Envoy was not directed to make any definite offers to the Ameer—any new Treaty—any new dynastic guarantee—or any one of the things which the Ameer had desired. The only reward to be given him for agreeing to sacrifice the surviving Article of the Treaty of 1857 and the pledges of Lord Mayo, was an assurance "of the earnest desire of Her Majesty's Government that his territories should remain safe from external attack." But as this assurance had been given to him over and over again, and with special emphasis and formality by Lord Northbrook, at Simla, in 1873,—as, moreover, he knew it to be true, because it was an assurance founded on our own interests,—this despatch did, in fact, demand of the Ameer to give up that which he valued above all the other boons he had received from former Viceroys, and offered him nothing whatever that was new in return. But more than this—it directed that the new demand should be made upon him, not as a friendly request if he should be really willing to grant it, but under threats. The Envoy was, indeed, to maintain a friendly "tone." But these significant words were added: "It will be the Envoy's duty earnestly to press upon the Ameer the risk he would run if he should impede the course of

action which the British Government think necessary for securing his independence."*

The Government of India is a subordinate Government, and owes ultimate obedience to the responsible advisers of the Crown. But from the traditions of its history, and from the necessities of its position, its subordination is qualified by a large and a well-understood measure of independence. There were some things in this despatch which that Government could not be made the instrument of doing without remonstrance. In the first place, they objected to the practice of dissimulation towards the Ruler of Afghanistan. They objected to make upon him some demand which was to be only "ostensible," with the view of keeping back the real object we desired to gain. They wished to be allowed to speak the truth. In the second place, they thought that if the thing were to be done at all, something more definite should be offered to the Ameer than the mere repetition of assurances already given, and which he well knew to be securely founded on a just estimate of our own political interests. They thought that the Viceroy should inform the Ameer that the "condition of affairs in Central Asia made it expedient that the relations between the British Government and Afghanistan should be placed on a more definite footing than at present."

* Ibid., No. 33, pp. 147-9.

Holding these views, Lord Northbrook and his Council determined that they could not act on the instructions conveyed by the Despatch of November 19, 1875, without another reference to the Government at home, and another full representation of their unaltered opinion on the impolicy of the whole proceeding. This accordingly they did in a Despatch dated the 28th of January, 1876. They had to deal delicately and yet firmly with the suggestion that the Viceroy of India should begin a negotiation with the Ameer by an attempt to cajole and to deceive him. I think it will be acknowledged that they did so deal with it in the following passage:—"The result of our deliberations is that we are convinced that if a Mission is to be sent to Cabul, the most advisable course would be to state frankly and fully to the Ameer the real purpose of the Mission." Lord Northbrook also took occasion, once more, and more decidedly than ever, to remind the Secretary of State that the proposal was "a departure from the understanding arrived at between Lord Mayo and the Ameer at the Umballa Conferences of 1869." He declared that he was in possession of no information which led him to believe that the Russian Government had any intention or desire to interfere with the independence of Afghanistan. He pointed out that the Ameer up to the very latest date, September, 1875, had continued to act on the policy recommended to him by the British Government, and had

prevented his people from showing sympathy with a rising in Kokhand against Russian authority. Finally, the Government of India declared that they continued to "deprecate, as involving serious danger to the peace of Afghanistan and to the interests of the British Empire in India, the execution, under present circumstances, of the instructions conveyed" in the Despatch of November, 1875.*

As Lord Northbrook had now resigned, and as the Government had the prospect of appointing a Viceroy after their own heart, this resolute resistance of the Government of India was suffered to stay proceedings for a time.

The instructions to the new Viceroy were signed on the 28th of February, 1876.† It will be observed that the date of this Despatch is just one month after the Cabinet had been reluctantly compelled to join in the Andrassy Note.‡ Whatever fears and jealousy of Russia had been long affecting the minds of the Government were not likely at that moment to be working with abated force. Accordingly, in its very first paragraph, the Despatch set forth that the "increasing weakness and uncertainty of British influence in Afghanistan constitutes a prospective peril to British interests." This was at least quite honest. There is no attempt here to pretend that the new policy was

---

* Ibid., No. 34, pp. 149–155.

† Ibid., No. 35, Inclos. pp. 156-9. ‡ See ante, Vol. I., p. 164.

animated by a disinterested anxiety for the welfare of the Ameer. In his former Despatches, as we have seen, Lord Salisbury had not even pretended to offer him any compensation.

But Lord Northbrook's parting remonstrances had effected something. The new instructions adopted his suggestion, that an endeavour should be made to offer to the Ameer something in return for the sacrifice we were demanding of him, and that he should be invited to enter into a larger and more definite arrangement than had heretofore existed. So far the Government had profited by the remonstrances of Lord Northbrook and his Council. Their instructions to him had contemplated no such course, and had enjoined upon him nothing but to make an "ostensible" demand upon the Ameer which was to cover another demand still more obnoxious.

But when we come to examine closely the method in which the new Despatch worked out the suggestion of Lord Northbrook, that if this unjust and inexpedient demand were to be made at all, it should be accompanied by some other proposals of a more soothing character, we find nothing but a series of ambiguities, with a strong under-current of the former tendency to deception. I do not deny that many of these ambiguities arise out of the insuperable difficulty attending the policy to be pursued. The centre of that difficulty lay in this—that the only things which the Ameer really cared to get, were things

which no British Government could possibly give him, whilst, on the other hand, the only things which we could give him, were things which he knew we must give him from motives of our own. How Lord Northbrook would have overcome this difficulty, if he had continued to be Viceroy, it is needless to speculate, because the policy was one of which he disapproved,—on account, partly, of those very difficulties which were inseparable from it. But one thing was clearly indicated in his last Despatch—namely, this, that everything would have been explained to the Ameer with perfect openness, in a friendly spirit, and without aggravating the injustice of violated Treaties and broken promises, by the still greater injustice of menaces and threats.

Let us now see how these difficulties were met by the instructions to the new Viceroy. On the subject of the compensating advantages which might be offered to the Ameer in return for the new demands which were to be made upon him, we shall find that the one great object kept in view by the Secretary of State, was—to offer as little as possible in reality, and as much as possible in appearance.

The first thing which the Ameer was well known to desire was a fixed annual subsidy of considerable amount. Even with this question the Despatch shows a disposition to fence. It was one of "secondary magnitude." But on the whole the Secretary of State points to an adverse decision, and tells the new Viceroy that

he "would probably deem it inexpedient to commit his Government to any permanent pecuniary obligation" (par. 13). The same liberty, however, which had been given by former Cabinets to Lord Lawrence and to Lord Mayo, was given to Lord Lytton, as to occasional subsidies, to be granted to the Ameer, at discretion, and from time to time.

Next comes the dynastic guarantee—one of the greatest objects of Shere Ali's desire—that the British Government should commit itself to him and to his family, and should promise to support by arms whatever nomination to the succession might be determined by the influence of some favourite inmate of his harem.

With this question Lord Salisbury fences still more obviously. The paragraphs dealing with it (pars. 14, 15, 16)* remind one of the action of a heavy fish rising shyly at a fly, not touching it with its mouth, but giving it a flap with its tail. The Secretary of State refers to the passage of Lord Mayo's letter in 1869 which had been the subject of correspondence between that Viceroy and myself, and respecting the sense of which we had arrived at a clear and definite understanding. He styles that passage a "solemn and deliberate declaration;" and in the next paragraph he calls it an "ambiguous formula." He says that former Governments had not based upon that declara-

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, No. 35, p. 158.

tion any "positive measures." He says that, having been given "under circumstances of some solemnity and parade, it appears to have conveyed (to the Ameer) a pledge of definite action in his favour." He does not venture to affirm directly that Lord Mayo had bound himself to support by arms any succession that Shere Ali might determine to appoint. But he implies it—in the teeth of Lord Mayo's published explanation, that he had specially warned the Ameer that, under no circumstances, should a British soldier cross the frontiers of India in support of any such course.

Having got so far in misrepresenting what had been already done, the Government at last approach the point where it becomes necessary to say something as to what they themselves were prepared to do. But again they come up to that point only to go round about it. "Her Majesty's Government do not desire to renounce their traditional policy of abstention from all *unnecessary* interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan."* The stress here is on the word "unnecessary." Had it become necessary to pledge the British Government to support a nomination virtually made by the mother of Abdoolah Jan? Surely it was possible to say Yes or No to that question. But neither Yes nor No is definitely spoken. Refuge is taken in the "ambiguous formula" of an abstract

* Ibid., para. 16, p. 158.

proposition. It is an ambiguous formula, however, which has a very obvious purpose. "But," says the Despatch, "the frank recognition of a *de facto* order in the succession established by a *de facto* Government to the throne of a Foreign State does not, in their opinion, imply or necessitate any intervention in the internal affairs of that State."

The ingenuity of this passage is great. It enabled Lord Lytton to give to Shere Ali an "ostensible" dynastic guarantee, without giving him the reality. He might recognise the order of succession established in favour of Abdoolah Jan simply as a fact,—just as Shere Ali's own actual occupation of the throne had been acknowledged as a fact. But this acknowledgment need not imply, and ought not to imply, any pledge whatever to support it by force of arms if ever it came to be contested. Thus Shere Ali might be allowed to get the appearance of that which he desired, without the substance.

Having laid this trap for the unfortunate Ameer, and laid it, I must say, with incomparable ingenuity and skill, the Government proceeds to deal with the remaining difficulties of the case precisely in the same spirit. The next thing which the Ameer desired was some guarantee against foreign aggression, which should be practically unconditional —a guarantee which should place the resources of England and of India, in money, in men, and in arms, at his disposal, without any troublesome re-

strictions or control. The Government were in possession of very recent information that such was really the aim of Shere Ali. The only part of the Secret Note of that mysterious individual, "X. Y.," on which any reliance can be placed—because the only part of it which is corroborated by other evidence—is that part in which "X. Y." describes what Noor Mohammed told his master it would be desirable and practicable to obtain. It was this:—"That the money and arms be given by the British Government; the men composing the troops should be provided by us, and the power and management should rest with ourselves."* How was this state of things to be dealt with in the new instructions? Let us see.

The first thing to be done, as in the former case, was to put a suitable gloss upon what had been done by former Viceroys,—that the contrast with what was to be done now might be the more imposing. In the case of Abdoolah Jan, this gloss had to be put upon the doings of Lord Mayo. It had now to be put upon the doings of Lord Northbrook. Not much consideration was due to him. He had thwarted the designs of the Government, and he had been compelled to do so in terms which, however respectful, involved reproach. It was all the more natural to discover now, although it had not been discovered before, that there had been something seriously wrong in his proceedings at

* Ibid., No. 32, Inclos. 11, p. 143.

Simla in 1873. The Government had been in office for two years, and had never hinted this opinion to the Government of India; but an occasion had arisen when the expression of it became convenient. Accordingly (in pars. 21, 22), we have the intimation that the assurance given by Lord Northbrook to the Ameer in 1873 was only a "personal assurance." This is the first hint of a distinction between the promise of a Viceroy and a pledge binding on the Government, of which we shall find great use made in the sequel. In this place it is of no other use than to prepare the way for a disparagement of the proceedings at Simla, which had become necessary for the purposes of the Despatch. That disparagement is proceeded with in the next paragraph (22). Lord Northbrook's declaration is described as just "sufficient to justify reproaches on the part of Shere Ali if, in the contingency to which it referred, he should be left unsupported by the British Government," and yet as "unfortunately too ambiguous to secure confidence or inspire gratitude on the part of his Highness." The suggestion is then made that on account of this conduct of Lord Northbrook the Ameer had "remained under a resentful impression that his Envoy had been trifled with." If, therefore, Shere Ali were to be frank with Lord Lytton's Envoy, he could probably renew the demand addressed to Lord Northbrook in 1873, "that in the event of any aggression on the Ameer's territories, the British Government should distinctly state that it re-

gards the aggressor as its enemy ; and, secondly, that the contingency of an aggression by Russia should be specifically mentioned in the written assurance to be given to the Ameer."*

Here, then, was a suggested demand on the part of the Ameer, which, though by no means expressed in a very extreme form, did indicate a guarantee without definite conditions, and tending to compromise the freedom of the British Government. It would have been easy to tell Lord Lytton at once, and without circumlocution, whether he was to comply with it or not. But, again, we have a very "shy rise," and a sheer-off into the safe obscurity of a foam of words. In the first place, it is explained that the answer must not be made identical "in terms" with the answer of Lord Northbrook. That would be only to prejudice instead of to improve our relations with the Ameer, "by the evasion of an invited confidence."† But then follows a passage which implies that, although the terms were not to be identical, the substance was to be the same. It had been Lord Northbrook's object to keep the freedom of the British Government, and not to let the Ameer have a guarantee without conditions. Again, it would have been easy to say, frankly and openly, whether the Government did or did not mean to keep this free-

* Ibid., p. 159.
† Ibid., para. 23, p. 159.

dom. But, again, they evade the point by the following carefully balanced ambiguities (par. 24): "Her Majesty's Government are therefore prepared to sanction and support any more definite declaration which may, in your judgment, secure to their unaltered policy the advantages of which it has been hitherto deprived by an apparent doubt of its sincerity. But they must reserve to themselves entire freedom of judgment as to the character of circumstances involving the obligation of material support to the Ameer, and it must be distinctly understood that only in the case of unprovoked aggression would such an obligation arise."

It is needless to point out that this is merely a verbose, obscure, and not very ingenuous repetition of the assurance given by Lord Northbrook,—the very same limitations being carefully reserved, and Lord Lytton being simply authorised to go as near as he could to the appearance of an unconditional guarantee without actually giving it. The whole paragraph is an elaborate repetition of the expedient by which it had been suggested that the Ameer should be cajoled on the dynastic guarantee in support of Abdoolah Jan.

In return for these illusory and deceptive guarantees, the largest and most absolute demands were to be made on the unfortunate Ameer. These demands were concealed in terms quite wide enough to cover that which the Ameer had always dreaded and suspected—the complete transfer to us of the whole government of

his country. The British Government was not only to have for their Agents "undisputed access to the frontier positions" of the Afghan Kingdom; not only were they to "have adequate means of confidentially conferring with the Ameer upon all matters as to which the proposed declaration would recognise a community of interests;" but much more—"they must be entitled to expect becoming attention to their friendly counsels; and the Ameer must be made to understand that, subject to all fair allowance for the condition of the country and the character of the population, territories ultimately dependent upon British power for their defence must not be closed to those of the Queen's officers or subjects who may be duly authorised to enter them."

It is needless to point out that there is nothing in the way of interference that might not be brought within the range of this sweeping declaration. The first Article of the Treaty imposed by Russia on the Khan of Khiva was a more honest, but not a more complete, announcement of political subjection. "The Khan acknowledges himself to be the humble servant of the Emperor of All the Russias." This is at least plain and honest speaking, whilst it is to be observed that in that Treaty Russia did not inflict on the vassal Khan the additional humiliation of pretending to respect his independence. The demand to establish an Agency in Herat, or even at several of the cities of Afghanistan, sinks into insignificance when compared

with the intimation that the country might be filled with European officers and emissaries, to any extent the British Government might please, and with the intimation also that the Ameer was expected to pay "becoming attention" to whatever that Government might consider to be "friendly counsel," whether on domestic or on foreign affairs.

Having thus instructed Lord Lytton to make these tremendous demands upon the Ameer, in complete contempt and violation of Treaties and of the pledges of Lord Mayo, it seems to have occurred to Lord Salisbury that he had not even yet sufficiently guarded against the possibility of too much being offered in return. He reverts, therefore, in the 26th paragraph to the subject of the guarantees to be held out to the Ameer. He tells the Viceroy that any promise to be given to Shere Ali of "adequate aid against actual and unprovoked attack by any foreign Power" must be "not vague, but strictly guarded and clearly circumscribed." As if in mockery it was added, that, if a personal promise—in itself so equivocal—were offered to the Ameer, it would "probably satisfy his Highness," "if the terms of it be unequivocal." But the Viceroy was free to consider the advantages of a Treaty "on the above-indicated basis." The Despatch then proceeds to inform the new Viceroy that the "conduct of Shere Ali has more than once been characterised by so significant a disregard of the wishes and interests of the Government of India, that the irretrievable alienation of his confidence in the sincerity and power of that

Government, was a contingency which could not be dismissed as impossible." This is an accusation which is not supported by a single proof, or even by a single illustration. It is in the teeth of the evidence which had just been given on the subject by the Government of India. The Ameer had given no other indication of a "disregard of the wishes and interests of the Government of India" than was involved in a desire to keep that Government to the promises it had given him. It is, however, the common resource of violent men to traduce those whom they are about to wrong.

There is one other passage in these Instructions which cannot be passed over without notice. It is a passage which refers to what may be called the Russophobian literature of England and of India. It states very truly that translations of that literature were carefully studied by the Ameer. "Sentiments of irritation and alarm at the advancing power of Russia in Central Asia find frequent expression through the English press, in language which, if taken by Shere Ali for a revelation of the mind of the English Government, must have long been accumulating in his mind impressions unfavourable to its confidence in British power." The conclusion drawn from this seems to be,—to judge from the rest of the Despatch,—that it would be well to convince him of our power at the expense of giving him the most just reason to distrust both our moderation and our good faith.

How different is the conclusion from that drawn from the same premises by Lord Mayo! I have shown how, in going to Umballa, he wrote to me of the accusations made against the Ameer by the Anglo-Indian press,—then in one of its periodical fits of excitement about the "advances of Russia,"—to the effect that Shere Ali was a mere Russian tool. The inference Lord Mayo drew was, that it was all the more necessary for him to show the silence of conscious strength,—to treat the Ameer with kindness and with confidence,—to give him every possible indication that we had a sincere desire to respect his independence, and to strengthen his Government. In the instructions of Lord Lytton his independence was trampled under foot, and the new Viceroy was educated in every sentiment towards him which could inspire a treatment of distrust and of indignity.

It is the authors and admirers of this Despatch—so imperious in its tone, so violent in its demands, so hollow in its promises—who, in the late debates in Parliament, have pretended that Lord Northbrook in 1873 did not sufficiently favour the Ameer by giving him an unconditional guarantee.

It is not to be understood, however, that this Despatch of the 28th of February, 1876, exhausted the instructions with which Lord Lytton was sent out to India. In the first place, the Despatch as given to Parliament, long and detailed as it is, is only an "extract." We do not know what other injunctions may have been laid upon him. But, in the second

place, Lord Lytton did not leave England till towards the end of March. During that time he had been in personal conference with Her Majesty's Government, and also with the Russian Ambassador in England.* We know nothing of the results of these conferences, except by occasional allusions to them in later speeches and writings of the Viceroy. From several passages in these we derive one fact which is not unimportant, although, indeed, it is a fact which makes itself sufficiently apparent from other evidence—and that is, that during these months of conference at home, every Indian question was regarded from the one point of view which was engrossing all attention at the time—namely, the point of view which connected it with the Central Asian question. Not only Afghan questions, but all questions affecting what was called border or frontier policy—however local they would have been considered in other days—were canvassed and discussed entirely in their "Mervous" aspects.†

A remarkable illustration of this was afforded

* Ibid. (Simla Narrative), para. 21, p. 165.

† See Parl. Pap. Biluchistan, II., 1877, No. 194, para. 17, p. 356. It is here distinctly stated that the Viceroy, "having had the advantage before leaving England of personal communications" with the Secretary of State, "was strongly impressed by the importance of endeavouring to deal with them (viz., our frontier relations) as indivisible parts of a single Imperial question mainly dependent for its solution on the foreign policy of Her Majesty's Government." It is by this means that the people of India are o be made to pay for the policy of the Government in the Balkan Peninsula.

by transactions which were going on at the very time of Lord Lytton's appointment. It so happened that one of those questions was in a condition which lent itself very handily to their state of mind. For many years there had been troubles in Beloochistan—troubles between the Khan of Khelat and his nobles and chiefs which often threatened civil war, and were very inconvenient to our trade through Scinde. The Government of India had long been in Treaty relations with this "Khanate," which entitled them to intervene, and to send troops for the occupation of the country. Lord Northbrook had to deal with this matter, and had been advised by his frontier officers to occupy the country with a military force. Instead of this, he had sent an officer, Major Sandeman, who, by less violent measures, had made some progress in remedying the evils which had arisen. But just before he left India, he found it necessary to despatch this officer again into Khelat, and this time attended by a considerable escort,—upwards of 1000 men,—which amounted to at least a military demonstration. Now, as the occupation of Quetta, a town in the Khan of Khelat's territory, was one of the favourite measures always recommended by those who were nervous on the Central Asian Question, it was obviously not only possible, but easy to take advantage of this state of things to make the occupation of Quetta appear to arise out of a purely local exigency, and so to gain an important step in a

new policy, quietly and almost without observation. Accordingly, this seems to have been the design of the Government in the conferences with Lord Lytton before he left London. The last step taken by Lord Northbrook did not fit in quite conveniently with this design, and a somewhat unusual incident occurred. The Viceroys of India always continue in the full exercise of their powers until their successors are actually sworn in at Calcutta. Those who succeed them are generally men not previously well versed in Indian questions, and they usually approach the duties and responsibilities of that great office with a strong sense of the necessity of learning, and of not proceeding hastily on preconceived opinions. Lord Lytton, however, on this occasion, took the unprecedented step of endeavouring to interfere with the action of the existing Viceroy in a very delicate matter, before he himself had been installed in office, if not before he had even set foot in India.* Lord Northbrook very properly declined to divest himself of his functions whilst it was still his duty to discharge them. It had been his duty during a very considerable time to consider carefully all that was involved in the method of dealing with the Khan of Khelat, and he determined to prosecute the measures on which he and his Govern-

* I owe this fact to a statement made during the late debates in the House of Commons by Lord George Hamilton. The interference of Lord Lytton with the then existing Government of India is stated to have been by telegraph.

ment had decided, notwithstanding the unprecedented conduct of Lord Lytton in endeavouring to interfere. But the fact of this endeavour having been made at all is a sufficient indication of the impulse under which the new Viceroy went out, to consider everything in connexion with the prevalent excitement on the "Eastern Question," and to start in India what was called "an Imperial policy."

Let us now follow the course which was taken in this spirit with reference to our relations with Afghanistan.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON IN APRIL, 1876, TO THE OPENING OF THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE ON THE 30TH JANUARY, 1877.

THE first thing done by the Government, in communication with Lord Lytton, was to select Sir Lewis Pelly as the Special Envoy who was to be sent to the Ameer. Sir Lewis Pelly is an active and very energetic officer. But he is the very type of all that makes a British Resident most dreadful in the eyes of an Indian Prince who values or who desires to keep even the shadow of independence. His name was at this time notorious over India, on account of his connexion with the very strong measures the Government of India had been compelled to take in the case of the Guicowar of Baroda. There have been, and there still are, many officers in our service in India who have obtained a great reputation for their influence over native Princes, and over the Sovereigns of neighbouring States, by virtue of qualities which seldom fail to secure their confidence. To pass over all of these, and to single out Sir Lewis Pelly was a

very clear publication to the Indian world how Shere Ali was to be treated.

The next thing which Lord Lytton did was to revert to the scheme to which Lord Northbrook refused to be a party—the scheme, namely, of not telling at once to the Ameer the truth respecting the real intention of the Mission—of finding some artificial "pretext" for sending it at all—and of setting forth in connexion with it certain objects which were to be merely "ostensible." In the 23rd paragraph of the Simla Narrative* Lord Lytton gives his account of this proceeding as if it were one of a perfectly creditable kind. He tells us that the "opportunity and pretext" which had hitherto been wanting for the despatch of a complimentary Special Mission to Cabul were "furnished" by two circumstances. The first of these was his own recent accession to the office of Viceroy of India, whilst the second was the recent assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress of India. With this "ostensible" object, but with "secret instructions" of a very different kind, the Special Envoy was to be preceded by a "trusted native officer, charged to deliver a letter to the Ameer from the Commissioner of Peshawur." This "pretext" was surely rather too transparent. Shere Ali had seen Lord Lawrence succeeded by Lord Mayo, and he had seen Lord Mayo succeeded by Lord Northbrook; but neither of these Viceroys had announced

* Afghanistan, 1878, I., No. 36, p. 166.

their recent accession to office in so formal a manner. There did not seem to be any special reason why Lord Lytton should blow such a trumpet before him, which had not been blown by his predecessors. Then, as regarded the new title of the Queen, unless it was to make some change, not merely in the form, but in the substance of our relations, both with our own feudatory Princes and with neighbouring Sovereigns whom we professed to regard as independent, it did not seem obvious why it should be announced to Shere Ali by a Special Envoy. Under the peculiar circumstances of the case, such a method of intimating this event would naturally rather rouse suspicion than allay it.

The letter of the Commissioner of Peshawur, written on behalf of the new Viceroy, was dated May 5, and reached the Ameer on the 17th of May. 1876. It opened by telling him that at a long interview which he had with Lord Lytton, his Excellency had "enquired very cordially after his Highness's health and welfare, and those of his Highness Abdoollah Jan." It informed him of the Viceroy's intentions of sending his friend, Sir Lewis Pelly, for the purposes already explained. No consent was asked on the part of the Ameer—thus departing at once from all previous usage and understanding on the subject. It expressed confidence that the Ameer would fully reciprocate the friendly feelings of the Viceroy. It begged the favour of an intimation of the place at which it would be most

convenient for the Ameer to receive the Envoy; and it concluded by informing him that Sir Lewis Pelly, who was honoured by the new Viceroy with his Excellency's fullest confidence, would be able to discuss with his Highness matters of common interest to the two Governments.* As it was perfectly well known that the Ameer thought it unsafe for him to leave Cabul, on account of Yakoob Khan's presence there, this letter of the Viceroy was a peremptory message, not only that a Mission would be sent, but practically also that it must be received at the Capital.

The Ameer's reply, which was dated May 22nd, is a model of courtesy and of what he himself calls "farsightedness." He was delighted to hear of the interviews of the Commissioner with the new Viceroy. He was delighted to hear of the accession to office of his Excellency. He was delighted to hear that the Queen had become "Shah-inshah." He added, with much significance, that he had a "firm hope" that from this most excellent title of the Great Queen, "an additional measure of repose and security in all that belonged to the affairs of the servants of God would be experienced in reality."

It is never pleasant for any man who is dealing with a neighbour through "pretexts" to be told so gently and so civilly that they are seen through. It

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 6, p. 174.

must have been particularly provoking to the new Viceroy to be assured of a firm hope on the part of the Ameer that the new Imperial title of the Queen was to be connected with new securities for a peaceful and reassuring policy.

But the Ameer now proceeded to make another intimation which must have been still more provoking. It was part of the case, as we have seen, which the Government and Lord Lytton desired to put forward, that the assurances given to the Ameer in 1873 had not been sufficient, and that on account of this he had no sufficient confidence in our support. This case was seriously damaged by the declaration of the Ameer, which immediately followed, that he saw no use in the coming of new Envoys, inasmuch as his Agent had "formerly, personally, held political parleys at the station of Simla," when "those subjects full of advisability for the exaltation and permanence of friendly and political relations, having been considered sufficient and efficient, were entered in two letters, and need not be repeated now."* So awkward was this passage for Lord Lytton that in the subsequent Simla Narrative we find him compelled to put a gloss upon it, in order to extract its sting. In the same twenty-third paragraph of that Narrative to which I have already referred, the Ameer is represented as having said that he "desired no change in

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 7, p. 175.

his relations with the British Government, which appeared to have been defined by that Government to its own satisfaction at the Simla Conference." The letter of the Ameer does not say this. It does not say or imply that the satisfaction arising out of the Simla Conference was a one-sided satisfaction, felt by the British Government, but not felt by himself. And when we find the Viceroy resorting to this gloss upon the words we understand where the words themselves were found to pinch.

But the next sentences of the Ameer's reply must have been still more unpleasant. He ventured to intimate that he knew quite well that the Viceroy had some ulterior designs, and that the pretexts he had put forward were "ostensible." He begged that if any new conferences were intended "for the purpose of refreshing and benefiting the State of Afghanistan," "then let it be hinted," in order that a confidential Agent of the Ameer "being presented with the things concealed in the generous heart of the English Government should reveal them" to the Ameer.

This letter of Shere Ali was accompanied by a letter from our Native Agent, Atta Mohammed Khan, explaining all that he knew of the motives which had actuated the Ameer, and all the arguments which had been put forward in his Durbar, upon the proposals of the Viceroy. In this letter, the real fundamental objection which has always actuated the Rulers of Afghanistan in resisting the reception of European officers, is fully set forth. That objection is the fear

that these Agents would be perpetually interfering—making demands or proposals which it would be equally embarrassing for the Ameer to grant or to refuse. One of the other arguments put forward as supporting and more or less covering this one great actuating motive was the argument that if the British Government were to urge European officers on the Ameer the Russian Government might follow its example. If this argument had been used in the letter of the Ameer it would have formed a legitimate ground of some temperate and friendly remonstrance on the part of the Viceroy; because it implies a misrepresentation of the well-known relative positions of the British and Russian Governments towards Afghanistan. But this argument was not used in the letter of the Ameer. It was only reported as having been used in the private consultations of the Durbar.* Our knowledge of the fact that it had been used at all is, indeed, a signal illustration of the fidelity with which we were served by our native Agency, and of the fallacy of at least one of the pretences on which the new policy was founded.

The letter of the Ameer must have reached the Commissioner of Peshawur about the 3rd of June, 1876.† But no reply was given to it for more than

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 8, pp. 175, 176.

† I have assumed here that it takes twelve days to send a letter from Peshawur to Cabul, because in several cases this time seems to have been actually taken. But I am informed that four days only are required.

a month. In the Simla Narrative, the Viceroy, who himself avows that his own letter had been sent upon a "pretext," and had made proposals which were only "ostensible," has the courage to describe the reply of the unfortunate Ameer as a response of "studied ambiguity;"* the truth being that there was about it no ambiguity whatever, and that it was a reply representing straightforwardness itself when contrasted with the letter of Lord Lytton.

Cajolery having failed, it was now determined to try the effect of threats. Accordingly, after the lapse of more than a month, on the 8th of July, the Commissioner of Peshawur addressed another letter to the Ameer—the terms of which were dictated, of course, by the Government of India. We have no official information how this interval of a month had been employed. But we have the best reason to believe that Lord Lytton had difficulties with his Council. Three of its most distinguished members, Sir William Muir, Sir Henry Norman, and Sir Arthur Hobhouse were opposed altogether to the new "Imperial" policy. Somehow, the expression of their opinions has been suppressed. But it is at least extremely probable, from the time spent in discussion and from information which has been published, that their remonstrances had some effect, and that the letter to the Ameer finally decided upon may have

* Ibid., No. 36, para. 24, p. 167.

been delayed by their resistance. The purport of this letter, and the spirit which it was intended to express, was more fully explained in a covering letter which was not addressed directly to the Ameer, but to the British Agent at his Court. This covering letter was written not only to comment upon what the Ameer had said in his own official reply, but also upon the report which had been furnished by our Agent of the debates in the Durbar. It was, therefore, in itself, a very remarkable exposure of that other pretext so long put forward by the Indian Secretary, that our Mohammedan Agent at Cabul did not give us full and trustworthy information as to what was going on in the Capital of the Ameer. Assuming the perfect correctness of our Agent's information, it commented with severity and even bitterness on one or two of the motives and arguments of the Government of Cabul. Some of these arguments it misrepresents. For example, it refers to the fear lest the Envoy "should address to the Ameer demands incompatible with the interests of His Highness."* This is not a correct or a fair account of the fear which had been reported by our Agent. That fear was that the Envoy might "put forward such weighty matters of State that its entertainment by His Highness, in view of the demands of the time, might prove difficult," and that the Ameer should find himself obliged to

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 10, p. 177.

reject it verbally. There is all the difference in the world between these two representations. The one implies a charge against the British Government, or a suspicion of its intentions, that it might desire to injure the Ameer; whereas, the other implies nothing more than that he feared proposals which might to him appear inexpedient, and that he desired to keep his freedom and his political independence in not being exposed to undue pressure upon such matters.

The letter does indeed give assurances to the Ameer of a desire to consider in a friendly spirit all that he might have to suggest. But behind all these assurances the Ameer knew that the real object was to force upon him the abandonment of the engagement made, and the pledges given, by previous Viceroys on the subject of British officers resident in his dominions. He knew, moreover, that this object was aimed at not by persuasion but by threats. He was warned of the "grave responsibility" he would incur if he deliberately rejected the opportunity afforded him. But the bitterest passage of this letter was that which referred to the frank indication given by the Ameer that he knew there was some object behind,—which had not been explained to him in the "ostensible" purport of the proposed Mission. This detection of the truth by Shere Ali rouses all the indignation of the Viceroy. He has the courage to talk of the "sincerity" of his own intentions. He denounces the "apparent mistrust" with

which his letter had been received by the Cabul Durbar, and he angrily declines to receive an Agent from the Ameer who was to be sent with a view of becoming acquainted with what the Ameer "designated" as the "objects sought" by the British Government. Finally, the Ameer was warned that the responsibility of refusing would rest entirely on the Government of Afghanistan.*

The letter which was addressed personally to the Ameer, and which bore the same date, was much shorter. But it is remarkable in several ways. In the first place it reiterated the "ostensible" pretext that the Envoy was intended to announce Lord Lytton's accession to office, and also the assumption by the Queen of the Imperial title. But, in the second place, it gave renewed assurances that the Viceroy was sincerely desirous, not only of maintaining, but of materially strengthening, the bands of friendship and confidence between the two Governments, and it gave some obscure intimations of the benefits to be conferred. It did not distinctly promise a dynastic guarantee, but it hinted at it. Still less did it explain the device under which it had been discovered how an apparent dynastic guarantee could be given without involving any engagement whatever to support a "*de facto* order of succession" in case of its being disputed. But it did cautiously

* Ibid, pp. 176-177.

and carefully, and in very guarded language, just suggest to Shere Ali that something might be in store for him "more particularly affecting Afghanistan and the personal welfare of His Highness and his dynasty." Finally, the letter ended with a threat that if the refusal of the Ameer should render nugatory the friendly intentions of the Viceroy, his Excellency would be obliged "to regard Afghanistan as a State which has voluntarily isolated itself from the alliance and support of the British Government."*

These communications, which were dated at Peshawur on the 8th of July, must have reached the Ameer about the 20th of that month. On receipt of the letter to himself, together with the farther explanations, all conceived in the same spirit, which our native Agent was at the same time ordered to give him, the unfortunate Ameer was naturally at once alarmed and incensed. He saw that the powerful British Government was determined to break—and was then actually breaking—the promises made to him by former Viceroys, and he saw that this determination was unqualified and unredeemed by any promises which were of the slightest value. Whenever a Mohammedan Sovereign gets into a passion, or into a scrape out of which he does not see his way,—whenever, in short, he is driven to the wall,—his uniform resource is to appeal, or to con-

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 9, p. 176.

template an appeal, to Moslem fanaticism. On this occasion, Shere Ali was reported to have looked round about him, and to have consulted "Mollahs" as to whether he could get up what is called a "Jehad" or religious war. This, however, was merely a personal display of temper, and no symptom of it appeared in his official communications. He took some time but, under the circumstances, by no means an unreasonable time, to consider his course. His reply was dated September 3, 1876—or six weeks after he had received the Viceroy's letter. It is characteristic of the spirit in which the Simla Narrative of these transactions was written, and of the accuracy of its statements, that the 25th paragraph of that document calls this interval "a significant delay of two months." Considering that the Viceroy had himself delayed to answer the Ameer's former letter of the 22nd of May from about the 3rd of June, at which date it must have reached Peshawur, till the 8th of July, a period of five weeks,—considering that the British Government had nothing to fear, and nothing to lose—and considering that the Ameer had, or deemed himself to have, everything at stake, and had taken only one week longer to deliberate than Lord Lytton himself, this invidious misstatement of the Ameer's conduct is as ungenerous as it is inaccurate.

On the 3rd of September the Ameer replied, making three alternative proposals. One was that the Viceroy should agree to receive an Envoy from Cabul, who might explain everything. The next was that

the Viceroy would send an Envoy to meet on the frontier a selected representative of the Afghan State. A third was that the British Native Agent at Cabul, who had long been intimately acquainted with all his wishes, should be summoned by the Viceroy, and should expound the whole state of affairs, and that on his return to the Ameer he should bring a similar explanation from the Government of India.*

On the 16th of September the Viceroy replied through the Commissioner of Peshawur, accepting the last of these three alternatives, on the condition that the Ameer should explain his views fully and confidentially to the British Agent. In that case the Agent would be as frankly informed of the views of the British Government, and would explain them to the Ameer on his return to Cabul.† Our Agent, Atta Mohammed Khan, was directed to make all speed to meet the Viceroy at Simla, and not to let the object of his journey be known if any inquiries should be made about it.

The British Agent at Cabul, the Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, reached Simla in time to have a conversation with Sir Lewis Pelly and others on behalf of the Viceroy, on the 7th of October. The Ameer had declared that he had nothing to add to the wishes he had expressed at Umballa in 1869, and

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 14, p. 179.
† Ibid., Inclos. 16, p. 179.

through his Minister at Simla in 1873. But the Agent, on being asked to give his own estimate of the feelings of the Ameer and of the causes "which had estranged him from the British Government," mentioned eight different circumstances or transactions which were "among the causes of annoyance and estrangement." At the head of these was the Seistan arbitration. Our recent doings in Khelat came next. Our interference on behalf of his rebellious son, Yakoob Khan, was third in the list. The fourth was our sending presents to his feudatory, the Khan of Wakhan. The fifth was the results of the Conferences in 1873, during which his Minister had received some personal offence. The sixth was the terms of certain recent letters from the Commissioner of Peshawur. The seventh was that the Ameer counted on our own self-interest as the best security for our protection of his country. The eighth was our refusal to give him the offensive and defensive Treaty which Lord Mayo had refused to him at Umballa, and which had been refused ever since.

On the other hand, the Agent specified seven things which the Ameer really desired from us. First and foremost of these things was an engagement that no Englishman should reside in Afghanistan, or at all events in Cabul. The second was a renunciation of all sympathy or connexion with Yakoob Khan, and a dynastic guarantee of the succession as determined by himself. The third was a promise "to support the

Ameer, on demand, with troops and money, in all and every case of attack from without," as well as against internal disturbance.* The fourth was a permanent subsidy. The fifth was an engagement not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The sixth was that in any engagement made, words should be introduced making the alliance strictly offensive and defensive on both sides. The seventh was that we should recognise him by some new title, as he considered himself quite equal to the Shah of Persia.†

Having ascertained all this, which showed that the Ameer adhered closely and pertinaciously to the very same desires which he had vainly pressed on former Viceroys, Lord Lytton determined to see the Agent himself, and was, of course, obliged to make up his mind how far he would go in the direction of conceding, or appearing to concede, what his predecessors in office had been compelled to refuse. Strange to say, he began the conversation by telling the Agent that his information "was very full and interesting, but quite new." It will be seen from the narrative previously given that, on the contrary, there was very little indeed that was new, and that the Ameer's principal objects had been perfectly well known, and very accurately appreciated both by Lord Mayo and by Lord Northbrook. Lord Lytton then proceeded to

---

* Ibid, p. 182.

† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 18, pp. 181, 182.

explain to the Agent that the Ameer was mistaken in supposing that we should support him unless it were our own interest to do so, and that if he did not choose to please us, "the assistance which he seemed at present disinclined to seek or deserve, might, at any moment, be very welcome to one or other of his rivals." He further informed the Agent that the moment we ceased to regard Afghanistan as a friendly and firmly allied State there was nothing to prevent us from coming to "an understanding with Russia which might have the effect of wiping Afghanistan out of the map altogether." This was very threatening language. There was a good deal more of a similar kind, conceived in the worst possible taste. Thus, the Ameer was to be told that the British military power could either be "spread round him as a ring of iron," or "it could break him as a reed,"—and again that he was as "an earthen pipkin between two iron pots." But bad as all this was in tone, it did not involve any incorrect statement of facts. It was accompanied, however, by another announcement for which, so far as I know, there was not the shadow of justification. "If the Ameer does not desire to come to a speedy understanding with us, Russia does; and she desires it at his expense."* If this passage has any meaning, that meaning appears to be that Russia desired to come to some arrange-

* Ibid. p. 183.

ment with England under which the Kingdom of Cabul was to be sacrificed either in whole or in part. No papers justifying this statement have been presented to Parliament. I believe it to be one without the shadow of a foundation.

The Viceroy next proceeded to make a very satisfactory declaration—which was, that the British Government was then "able to pour an overwhelming force into Afghanistan, either for the protection of the Ameer, or for the vindication of its own interests, long before a single Russian soldier could reach Cabul." It is well to remember this: but the confidence expressed is not very consistent with the context either of words or of conduct.

It now became necessary, however, for the Viceroy to come to the point—how much he was prepared to offer to the Ameer. As preparatory to this he found it convenient, as his official instructions had done, to disparage what the Ameer had got from former Viceroys. Lord Lytton, therefore, went on to observe that "the Ameer has hitherto had only verbal understandings with us. The letter given him by Lord Mayo was not in the nature of a Treaty engagement, and was, no doubt, vague and general in its terms."

I have already expressed my opinion on this attempt to impair the binding obligation of solemn promises and pledges given by the Viceroys of India, whether they be merely verbal, or written only in the form of letters. It is a doctrine incompatible with that con-

fidence which has hitherto been maintained in the honour of the British Government in India, and cannot be too severely condemned. It is a doctrine incompatible with the faithful fulfilment by the Crown of the assurances given in that very solemn document, the Proclamation issued on the assumption by the Crown of the direct Government of India—"We hereby announce to the Native Princes of India, that all the treaties and engagements made with them by, or under the authority of the East India Company, are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained." On no other principle can we keep our ground in India, and no Viceroy before Lord Lytton has ever attempted to evade it.

Lord Lytton then proceeded to detail the concessions he was willing to make. He agreed to the formula, "that the friends and enemies of either State should be those of the other." But the very next concession showed that some reserve was nevertheless maintained. Shere Ali had always asked for an absolute guarantee against aggression. But Lord Lytton would not omit the qualifying word which all former Viceroys had insisted upon—namely, "unprovoked." Of course the insertion of this word kept open the discretion of the British Government in each case, and, moreover, implied some sort of control over the foreign policy of the Ameer. The Viceroy also agreed to "recognise Abdoolah Jan as the Ameer's successor." But this was also qualified with great care

and some ingenuity. The qualification of the Cabinet, as we have seen, would have reduced this guarantee practically to a nullity. Lord Lytton tried hard, at a second interview with the Agent, to express the qualification in a manner as little formidable as possible to the Ameer. "If the Ameer, or his heir, were ever actually ejected from the throne of Cabul, the British Government would not undertake a war with the Afghans for their restoration. If, however, the Ameer gave notice in due time, while still in possession of his throne, that he was in difficulties, and needed material assistance, such assistance would be afforded within the limits of what might be found practically possible at the time."* I do not deny that this was quite as much as the Ameer could reasonably ask. On the contrary, I entirely agree with Lord Lytton that it was so, and quite as much as the British Government could safely give. But it was no appreciable addition to what had been actually done by Lord Lawrence and by Lord Mayo. They had both assisted him with money and with arms—on the very ground that he was in actual possession of his throne, although still in danger of losing it. This indeed had been their declared policy, and to this all their promises and assurances had pointed. But this was not what the Ameer wanted. It kept that element of discretion in the hands of the British Government to judge of the policy to be pur-

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 20, p. 185.

sued in each case, which destroyed the whole value of it in the opinion of the Ameer. Lord Lytton did indeed make one rather shy offer connected with this subject, which, I venture to think, might have landed us in a very false position, and in a very unjust course of conduct. He offered, if Shere Ali wished it, to keep Yakoob Khan in safe custody in India. That is to say, the British Government were to act as jailors for the Ameer of Cabul. If this meant that we were to bind ourselves by Treaty to prevent Yakoob, under whatever circumstances, from becoming a candidate for the throne of his father, it was a most dangerous offer, and we cannot be too thankful that it was not accepted.

Lastly, Lord Lytton did agree to offer a yearly subsidy to the Ameer, the amount of which, however, and the conditions of which, were left open for detailed consideration.

On the other hand, in return for these very small advances on what Shere Ali had already obtained in the promises and assurances of former Viceroys, Lord Lytton required him to give up absolutely that on which, as we have seen, he set the highest value. His foreign policy and conduct was to be absolutely under our control. This control was to be symbolised, if it was not to be actually exercised, by British officers resident at Herat and elsewhere on his frontiers. Afghanistan was to be freely open to Englishmen, official and unofficial. The result was that the

Ameer was offered nothing of that which he really desired, whilst, on the other hand, he was required to grant to us the whole of that demand which he had always regarded with the greatest dread.

Primed with this strange mixture of bluster and of baits, our Agent was sent off to Cabul, to translate it all as best he could to the unfortunate Ameer. For this purpose he was furnished with an "Aide Mémoire." It summed up the promises as plausibly as possible; it maintained the substantial limitations in terms as subdued and obscure as could be devised; but it distinctly made all these promises absolutely dependent on the new condition about the reception of British officers—and worse than this, it plainly intimated that not only were the new promises to be absolutely dependent on this condition, but the maintenance of existing promises also. Without that new condition, the Viceroy "could not do anything for his assistance, whatever might be the dangers or difficulties of his future position."*

The Agent was also charged with a letter from the Viceroy to the Ameer, in which Shere Ali was referred on details to the full explanations given to our Agent. But in this letter the Viceroy ventures on the assertion that he was now offering to the Ameer what he had vainly asked from former Viceroys. This assertion is thus expressed: "Your Highness will thus be assured

* Ibid. No. 36, Inclos. 21, pp. 185, 186.

by the Agent that I shall be prepared to comply with the wishes which you announced through your Agent at Simla in 1873, and to which you have adhered in more recent communications."*

But our native Agent was not the only diplomatist charged with this important mission. The Ameer had offered, as one of his alternatives, to send a special Envoy to meet upon the frontier another similar Envoy from the Viceroy. Lord Lytton would now graciously agree to this proposal. Sir Lewis Pelly was to be his Envoy. In anticipation of the Ameer's consent this officer was furnished with a long paper of recapitulations and instructions, dated October 17th, 1876, and also with a Draft Treaty.†

It is a matter of the highest interest to observe in these papers how deftly the delicate subject is dealt with in regard to the difference between what the Ameer desired to get, and what it was now proposed to give to him. In the fifth paragraph of Sir Lewis Pelly's new instructions he is desired to be governed by the terms of Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 28th of February, 1876.‡ We have seen how very safe and how very dexterously drawn this despatch was. But, on the other hand, as it was desirable to show as fine a hand as possible at this

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 22, p. 186.
† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23 and 24, pp. 187–191.
‡ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23, p. 187.

juncture, the following audacious statement is made in the sixth paragraph:—"The conditions on which the Governor-General in Council is now prepared to enter into closer and more definite relations with the Government of Afghanistan are in every particular the same as those desired by the Ameer himself on the occasion of his visit to Umballa in 1869, and again in more or less general terms so urged by him on the Government of India through his Minister, Syud Noor Mohammed Shah in 1873."

I call this statement audacious, because, as regards the transactions of 1869, it is contradicted in every syllable by an authoritative document which the Government of India must have had before it at the time. In certain paragraphs of Lord Mayo's despatch to me, of the 1st of July, 1869, we have a full explanation by that Viceroy of the unconditional character of the guarantees which were then desired by the Ameer, and which Lord Mayo had decided it was impossible to give him.* The assertion that the assurances which the Viceroy was now willing to offer to the Ameer corresponded "in every particular" with those thus described by Lord Mayo, is an assertion which it is impossible to characterise too severely.

Considering that Lord Lytton had just heard from the mouth of our own Agent at Cabul how very different "in every particular" the Ameer's

* Ibid., No. 19, paras. 8, 9, 10, 11, and 45, pp. 95 and 97.

real demands continued to be from the concessions which it was possible for the Viceroy or for any British Government to make, this broad assertion is one which is truly astonishing. It is all the more so, as in the very same document there is another paragraph (25), which seems to lay down the principle that the British Government could not go further than was consistent with the principles laid down by Lord Mayo in 1869, and the next paragraph (26) proceeds thus:—"For the same reason, the British Government cannot contract any obligation to support the Princes of Afghanistan against the opposition of the Afghan nation, or any large majority of their subjects whose loyalty has been alienated by misgovernment or oppression."*

In like manner, when we turn to the Draft Treaty which was placed in Sir Lewis Pelly's hands, we find the most elaborate precautions taken to prevent the assurances given from coming near to the guarantees which the Ameer really wanted. This is done by the constant introduction of qualifying words, and by a perfect wilderness of saving clauses. Let us take the Articles most important to the Ameer. First comes the External Guarantee. The Third Article† professes to give it. There was less need of caution here, because this guarantee coincides with our own interest in almost every conceivable case.

* Ibid., p. 189. † Ibid., p. 190

Nevertheless it was not to operate unless the Ameer had acted in strict conformity with the previous Article, which purported to be one of mutually offensive and defensive alliance. Nor was it to operate unless the Ameer had refrained from (1) provocation of, or (2) aggression on, or (3) interference with, the States and territories beyond his frontier. Besides all this, the succeeding Article, the Fourth, specifies that the Ameer was to conduct all his relations with foreign States in harmony with the policy of the British Government. Next comes the Dynastic Guarantee. It professes to be given by the Ninth Article. But this Article simply "agrees to acknowledge whomsoever His Highness might nominate as his heir-apparent, and to discountenance the pretensions of any rival claimant to the throne." But this is no more than Lord Mayo's promise of "viewing with severe displeasure" any disturbers of the existing order. There is no direct promise whatever to support the Ameer's nomination, if it should turn out to be unpopular in Afghanistan.

But the provisions of the Tenth Article are the best specimens of Lord Lytton's favours. This Article professes to provide for our non-interference in domestic affairs, and yet at the same time to hold out a prospect to the Ameer of support in the event of domestic troubles. This required some nice steering. Accordingly the saving clauses are positively bewildering. There is, first, the promise of abstention. Then there is the exception—"except at the invocation of

the Ameer." Then there are limitations on such an appeal. It must be to avert the recurrence of civil war, and to protect peaceful interests. The support may be material, or only moral, as the British Government may choose. The quantity of the support in either case was to be measured by their own opinion of what was necessary for the aid of the Ameer. But, again, even this aid was to be limited to the protection (1) of authority which was "equitable," (2) of order which was "settled," and (3) against an ambition which was "personal," or (4) a competition for power which was "unlawful."

I do not say that any one of these limitations was in itself unreasonable, or even unnecessary. But they were all elaborately designed to keep in the hands of the British Government, under the forms of a Treaty, that complete freedom to judge of each case as it might arise, according to times and circumstances, which Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had been determined to maintain. It was, however, precisely for the purpose of limiting this freedom that the Ameer had desired to get a Treaty. To offer him a Treaty which kept that freedom as it was, could be no response to his desires. It was, therefore, worse than an "ostensible pretext" to represent such a Treaty as a concession to the Ameer of that for which he had asked. The Viceroy, however, did not trust wholly to these illusory representations of the effect of the offered Treaty. He knew that the

Ameer was in want of money. The hooks were therefore heavily baited. If the Ameer agreed to sell his independence, he was to get £200,000 on the ratification of the Treaty, and an annual subsidy of £120,000.*

But, guarded as the Draft Treaty is in all these ways, the Viceroy seems to have been haunted by a nervous apprehension lest, after all, the Ameer should get some promise too definite and entangling. Sir Lewis Pelly was therefore also furnished with another "Aide Mémoire," for a "Subsidiary, Secret, and Explanatory Agreement."† In this document the reservations limiting our pretended guarantee are re-stated with laborious care.

In the twenty-seventh paragraph of the Simla Narrative, a very frank confession is made of the general result of these elaborate precautions. That result was that the poor Ameer, in return for all our demands, was to get practically nothing beyond what Lord Mayo had promised him in 1869. "These concessions, sanctioned by your Lordship's last instructions, would not practically commit the British Government to anything more than a formal re-affirmation of the assurances already given by it, through Lord Mayo, to the Ameer in 1869, and a public recognition of its inevitable obligations to the

* Ibid., p. 192.
† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 25, p. 191.

vital interests of its own Empire." That is to say—the Ameer was to get nothing except what former Viceroys had already given to him, and whatever more we might find it for our own interests to do on his behalf. After this confession, it is not to be denied that all the professions of Lord Lytton that he was now offering to the Ameer what he had desired, must be condemned as "ostensible pretexts."

I wish I had nothing more to add to the history of these deplorable transactions. But, unfortunately, there is another part of them, which must be told.

Lord Lytton had with him at Simla Captain Grey, who had been Persian Interpreter at the Conference at Umballa. As such he had become intimate with Noor Mohammed Khan, the confidential Minister of the Ameer. It seems to have occurred to the Viceroy that this friendship might be used for the purpose of representing to the Ameer that the Government of India was now offering to him all that he had ever asked or demanded. Accordingly, on the 13th of October, which was two days after Sir L. Pelly had been furnished with all these elaborate limitations, and multitudinous saving clauses, Captain Grey was employed to write a private letter to his friend Noor Mohammed. It referred, coaxingly, to the feeling of the Afghan Minister, that he had ground for annoyance at what had passed in 1873. It did not expressly say that the writer concurred in this impression. But Noor Mohammed was asked to "let by-gones be by-

gones." It pointed out to him that the Viceroy had now "accepted all the propositions which he (Noor Mohammed) made in 1873," imposing only the condition that he should be enabled to watch a frontier for which he was to render himself responsible, and that the Ameer, his friend and ally, should receive his Envoys. It then proceeded to remind the Afghan Minister of his alleged expressions at Umballa in 1869, and at Simla in 1873, as to the willingness of the Ameer at some future time to receive British officers in his Kingdom. It went on to represent the difficulty in the way at that time as having been the objection of former Viceroys to assume responsibility for the Afghan frontier. It represented that the existing Viceroy had no such objection, and was now prepared to assume that responsibility. In conclusion it intimated that hitherto, under former Viceroys, there had been "vacillation," because in the absence of a Treaty, "Ministers at home, and Viceroys in this country, exercised an unfettered discretion," but "where a Treaty has been entered into everyone would be bound by its conditions."*

What can be said of this letter—of its representations of fact—of its constructions of conduct—of its interpretation of the Viceroy's offers? It seems to me that nothing can be said which could be too severe. It is in the highest degree disingenuous and

* Afghan Corresp., II. 1878, No. 3, pp. 9, 10.

crooked. No part of it is worse than that in which it re-affirms by implication the distinction between the binding character of a Treaty, and the not-binding character of a Viceroy's promises. It represents former Viceroys as having taken advantage of this distinction in vacillating conduct. For this accusation, so far as I know, there is no foundation in fact. Lord Mayo and I had objected in 1869 to a Treaty, not because it would have made the promises we did give more binding than we considered them to be when less formally recorded, but because a Treaty was expected by both parties to involve other promises—of a different kind—which we were not willing to give. But another most objectionable part of this letter is that in which the Viceroy endeavours to persuade the Afghan Minister that he was now offering to the Ameer all he wanted. It is to be remembered that besides the knowledge which the Government of India had at its command in respect to the large expectations of the Ameer in 1873 and in 1869, this letter was written just six days after our own Agent at Cabul had told the Viceroy that what the Ameer wanted was that "we should agree to support the Ameer, on demand, with troops and money, in all and every case of attack from without."*

Before proceeding to the next scene in this strange, eventful history, it will be well to notice how Lord

* Ibid., p. 182.

Lytton himself tells his story, in the Simla Narrative, of the transactions through which we have just passed. That narrative professes to be founded on the documents which it enclosed, and yet it departs widely in many most important particulars from the facts which these documents supply. The account given in the 26th paragraph, of the causes of the Ameer's dissatisfaction, does not set forth these causes faithfully, as given by our native Agent, misstating their number, and, above all, putting them in a new order of relative importance. These deviations are not accidental. They appear to be all connected with one idea,—that of throwing as much blame as the Viceroy could on his immediate predecessor in the Government of India, and of keeping as much as possible in the background, or of suppressing altogether those causes of dissatisfaction on the part of the Ameer which were inseparably connected with the desire of that Ruler to get what no British Government could give him. There is a total omission of one cause of complaint mentioned (the sixth) by the Agent, for no other assignable reason than that this one reflected directly on the tone and terms of one of Lord Lytton's own recent letters to the Ameer. In the presence of much graver matter, it is not worth while pursuing this characteristic of the Simla Narrative in greater detail. It is, indeed, of much more than personal—it is of political importance. The Government of India is a continuous body, and does not formally change with a change of Viceroy. Any

unfaithfulness to perfect fairness and accuracy in a narrative professing to give an account of its own action under former Viceroys, if it is committed deliberately, is a grave political offence. If it is committed unconsciously, and simply under the impulse of a strong desire to make out a personal or a party case, it is still deserving of serious notice and rebuke.

The next characteristic observable in the Simla Narrative of this time is the endeavour it makes to accumulate charges and innuendos against the unfortunate Ameer in respect to his communications with General Kaufmann. The statement in the 26th paragraph of the Simla Narrative is that the Ameer had been losing no opportunity of improving his relations with the Russian authorities in Central Asia, and that between General Kaufmann and his Highness "permanent diplomatic intercourse was now virtually established, by means of a constant succession of special Agents, who held frequent conferences with the Ameer, the subject and result of which were successfully kept secret." There is no justification for this most exaggerated statement in the papers which accompany Lord Lytton's narrative. On the contrary, he had been distinctly and emphatically told by our Agent on the 7th October, at Simla, that "the Ameer regarded the Agents from Russia as sources of embarrassment."* All the authentic informa-

* Ibid., Inclos. 18, p. 181.

tion which had reached the Government was consistent with this view. Our Agent at Cabul had indeed reported that on the 9th of June a messenger had come with a letter from General Kaufmann, and that this messenger had been received for half an hour, at a formal interview, by the Ameer. The letter had not then been seen by our Agent, but he believed it to be "merely a complimentary one, conveying information of the fall of Kokhand."*

The only other information in support of Lord Lytton's sweeping accusations, is a letter from a native news-writer at Candahar, who retailed, on the 9th of August, certain reports which he had got from a man who "hired out baggage-animals in Turkestan, Bokhara, and Cabul." This man, on being asked for "the news of the country," professed to retail a story which, he said, had been told him by a certain Sirdar, who, however, was now dead. The story was that this Sirdar had taken with him to Cabul, secretly, "a Russian who came from Turkestan." This Russian, it was further said, used to have secret interviews with the Ameer. Shere Ali is then represented, in the tale, as having, "a few days after the arrival" of this Russian, sent for a certain Mulla, Mushk Alam, whom he consulted about a religious war against the English. What the connexion was between a Russian Agent and the "Mulla" is not explained or even sug-

* Ibid., Inclos. 12, p. 178.

gested.* This stupid and incoherent story, founded on the gossip of a trader in baggage-animals, and bearing on the face of it all the marks of such an origin, seems to be the only foundation for the circumstantial accusations made by the Viceroy of India against Shere Ali in the 26th paragraph of the Simla Narrative, composed when he was hotly engaged in running that Ruler down.

There is, indeed, one half-line in that paragraph which leads us to a very curious illustration of the inconsistencies and inaccuracies which are characteristic of all Lord Lytton's State Papers referring to the Afghan question. That half-line refers to the communications which had been going on from time to time for several years, between the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan and the Ameer of Cabul. It is, of course, perfectly true that General Kaufmann had sent letters to Cabul. It was just three weeks before our Cabul Agent came to Simla that the Viceroy had sent that alarmed telegram to the Secretary of State, on the 16th of September, touching the letter of General Kaufmann which had been received by the Ameer on the 14th of June. That letter had given to the Ameer a long account and explanation of the conquest of Kokhand. We have seen in a former page how Lord Lytton, in his telegram of the 16th, and still more in his relative

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 13, p. 178.

Despatch of the 18th of September, had denounced these letters as a breach of the Agreement of Russia with us, and how the Cabinet at home had taken up this view, and, within certain limits, had acted upon it. But in order to support this view, and make it plausible, the Viceroy had been led to represent the correspondence as one which had been always objected to by the Government of India, although they had never before formally remonstrated. The only foundation for this was that on one previous occasion Lord Northbrook had called attention to the tone of one of these letters —an instance of vigilance on the part of that Viceroy which had been entirely thrown away on her Majesty's Government, who had taken no notice whatever of his observation. But with this exception, it was entirely untrue that the Government of India had viewed the correspondence with alarm. On the contrary, as I have shown, both Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had encouraged the Ameer to welcome those letters, and to answer them with corresponding courtesy. Suddenly, in the Simla Narrative, Lord Lytton discovers that this is the true view of the case, because he was constructing a paragraph the object of which was to set forth the errors of former Viceroys. He, therefore, not only sets forth this view of the facts, but he sets it forth with emphasis and exaggeration. He says that the Ameer, in "losing no opportunity of improving his

relations with Russian authorities in Central Asia," had acted "in accordance with our own exhortations."* It is needless to say that this is in flagrant contradiction of the representation conveyed in the despatch of September 18th, 1876.† It is further interesting to observe that, in that despatch, the "baggage-animal" story about the "secret nightly conferences" between a Russian agent and the Ameer,—which reappears in the Simla Narrative as if it were an undoubted fact,—is referred to as coming from "an unofficial source of information" which the Government of India were, "of course, unable to verify."

Having now despatched—and having thus thoroughly prepared—his Agents alternately to frighten, to cajole, and to deceive the Ameer, the Viceroy proceeded on a tour to the frontier, and continued to pursue the same Imperial policy through some very remarkable proceedings. The time had come for converting Major Sandeman's mission to Khelat into the permanent occupation of Quetta. On the 22nd of October the Viceroy's Military Secretary selected a site for permanent barracks at that place. Under the pretext of disposing of Major Sandeman's escort, a detachment of Punjaub Infantry was posted there, and in no long time this force was enlarged to

---

* Ibid., No. 36, para. 26, p. 168.

† Central Asia, No. I. 1878, p. 83.

a small brigade of all arms. On or about the same day, the 22nd of October, Lord Lytton reached Peshawur, and a few days afterwards he gave orders for the construction of a bridge of boats at Khoshalgurh on the Indus. This bridge of boats—of which many months later, in June, 1877, the Indian Secretary of State declared he had never heard—was actually made and established in the course of a week. Officers were then sent to Tul, on the Afghan border, to inspect the ground preparatory to the establishment there of a military force. Military and commissariat stores were laid in at Kohat, and a concentration of troops was effected at Rawul Pindi. Following upon these strange and suspicious proceedings, of which no rational explanation has been ever given, the fussy activity of the Viceroy found employment in bribing the Maharajah of Cashmere to advance troops beyond Gilgit and towards Citval, so as to establish his authority over tribes which the Ameer of Cabul claimed as feudatories of his Kingdom. The immediate effect of all these measures combined was to make Shere Ali feel himself threatened on three different sides—on the east through Cashmere, on the south from Rawul Pindi, and on the west from Khelat. We cannot safely accept the denials of the Government that these movements were unconnected with the pressure which they were exercising on the Ameer. But it is at least extremely probable they had also a larger purpose. At this very time the firmness of the Emperor of Russia at Livadia was

confounding all the feeble and dilatory pleas of the English Cabinet. It is highly probable that at least some members of that Cabinet were seriously contemplating a war with Russia both in Europe and in Asia, for the purpose of maintaining in Europe the corrupt government of Turkey. The military preparations of the Viceroy may very probably have been due to personal instructions to prepare for an attack upon Russia in Central Asia—in which attack Afghanistan would have been used as a base. Under any supposition the Ameer was threatened.

Let us now return to Cabul, and see what was passing there.

Our Agent returned to that capital in the end of October, 1876. The consultations and deliberations which were held by the Ameer lasted two months—that is, till the end of December. Lord Lytton says, in the Simla Narrative, that the Ameer evinced a desire to gain time. Of course he did ; that is to say, he wished to delay as long as possible coming to a decision which placed before him the alternatives of sacrificing finally the friendship of the British Government, as well as all the promises, written and verbal, which had been given him by former Viceroys,—or of submitting to proposals which, as he and all his advisers firmly believed, involved the sacrifice of his independence. Lord Lytton again says that he was evidently waiting for the war which was likely to break out between Russia and England, in order that he might sell his alliance to the most successful, or to the

highest bidder. There is not a scrap of evidence in support of this view, as a matter of fact, and it is in the highest degree improbable as a matter of speculation. Shere Ali was far too shrewd a man to suppose that his alliance would be of much practical value to either party in such a contest. The whole idea is evolved out of Lord Lytton's inner consciousness. There is plenty of evidence that both the Viceroy and his official chiefs were all thinking of Russia and of nothing else. There is no evidence whatever that Shere Ali was thinking of them at all. There were, of course, plenty more of those rumours about Russian agents at Cabul which belong to the "baggage-animal" class. But such direct and authentic evidence as we have is to this effect—that the Ameer and his Durbar, and his Chiefs whom he consulted, were engrossed by one prevailing fear—that the violent conduct, threatening language, and imperious demands of the British Government, indicated a design to assume complete dominion in their country. So strong is this evidence that Lord Lytton is compelled to try to damage it, and accordingly he does not scruple to hint that Atta Mohammed Khan, our native Agent, who had for many years enjoyed the confidence of former Viceroys, was unfaithful to the Government he had so long served. In the 29th paragraph of the Simla Narrative, in reference to the delays which the Ameer had interposed on the ground of health, Lord Lytton complains that the Vakeel had accepted the excuse "either through

stupidity or disloyalty." Again, he says that the reports of our Agent had become "studiously infrequent, vague, and unintelligible." This is an assertion which is not borne out—which, indeed, is directly contradicted—by the papers which have been presented to Parliament. The letters of Atta Mohammed range from the 23rd of November* to the 25th of December† inclusive, and, during a period of less than a month, the number of them was no less than eight. Nor is it at all true that they are vague or unintelligible. On the contrary, they convey a very vivid and graphic account of the condition of things which it was the business of our Agent to describe. The picture presented is one of distracted councils, and of a sincere desire not to break with the powerful Government which was already violating its own promises, and was threatening a weak State with further injustice. Of course these letters of Atta Mohammed were not pleasant reading for Lord Lytton, and it is, perhaps, natural that he should disparage them.‡ But no impartial man who reads

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 26, p. 192.

† Ibid., Inclos. 33, p. 194.

‡ It is a curious comment on this most unjustifiable attack by the Viceroy on the character of Atta Mohammed Khan, that on the 13th of October, at the close of the last of the Conferences with him, Lord Lytton had presented him with a watch and chain, as well as 10,000 rupees, "in acknowledgment of the appreciation of the Government of his past faithful service" See Ibid., p. 185.

them can fail to see that they convey a very much more correct impression of the facts than the haphazard assertions and reckless accusations of the Viceroy. In particular, the very first of these letters, in its very brevity, is eminently instructive. It describes a sort of Cabinet Council to which the Agent was admitted, and its general result. That result was that the Government of Afghanistan was not in a position to receive British officers within the frontiers of that State; and the Agent adds, with great descriptive power, "The contemplation of such an arrangement filled them with apprehension."* Again, in the two letters dated December 21st, the Ameer is reported—in observations which described only too faithfully the hasty and excited action of the Government of India towards him—to have expressed the natural apprehensions with which this action inspired him, and the difficulty of so defining and limiting the duties of British Agents as really to prevent them from interfering in the government of his Kingdom. These accounts are perfectly clear, rational, and consistent, and the unjust account which is given of them by the Viceroy seems to be simply the result of the fretful irritation with which the Viceroy regarded every opposition to, or even remonstrance with, his new "Imperial Policy."

At last, towards the close of December, 1876, the

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 26, p. 192.

Ameer, frightened by the threats of the Viceroy, and plied by the urgency of our Agent,—half-forced to accept the hated basis, and half-hoping to be still able to escape from it—made up his mind to send his old confidential Minister, Noor Mohammed, to meet Sir Lewis Pelly at Peshawur. In the 29th paragraph of the Simla Narrative it is a comfort to find at least one little bit of fair statement. We are there told that "the Ameer, finding himself unable to evade any longer the issue put to him, without bringing his relations with us to an open rupture, dispatched his Minister." So much for the assertions, made more than once afterwards, that the Ameer had sought the Conferences, and had volunteered to send his Minister. The Conferences began on the 30th of January, 1877.

Let us now look back for a moment at the result of the transactions which we have traced.

First, we have the Secretary of State for India describing, and, by implication, disparaging, the assurances given to the Ameer by former Viceroys, as "ambiguous formulas."*

Secondly, we have the same Minister instructing the new Viceroy that a dynastic guarantee need be nothing more than "the frank recognition of a *de facto* order in the succession established by a *de facto* Government," and that this "does not imply or

* Afghan Corresp., I., 1878, No. 35, Inclos. para. 15, p. 158.

necessitate any intervention in the internal affairs of that State."*

Thirdly, we have like instructions with regard to the other guarantees which had been desired by the Ameer, and which were all to be framed on the same principle—namely, that of the British Government "reserving to themselves entire freedom of judgment as to the character of circumstances involving the obligation of material support to the Ameer."†

Fourthly, we have the Viceroy preparing, very elaborately, a "Draft Treaty,"‡ and a "Subsidiary Secret and Explanatory Agreement,"§ for carrying into effect the instructions and suggestions of the Secretary of State; this being done by Articles so full of qualifying words, and so beset with saving clauses, that the Government did indeed effectually reserve to itself the most "entire freedom" under every conceivable circumstance, to give, or not to give, to the Ameer the assistance of which he desired to be assured.

Fifthly, we have the fact that both the Secretary of State and the Viceroy had before them authoritative documents proving that guarantees or assurances of this kind, which were not only conditional, but wholly made up of conditions within conditions, were not the

---

* Ibid., para. 16.

† Ibid., para. 24, p. 159.

‡ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 24, p. 189.

§ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 25, p. 191.

kind of guarantee or of assurance which the Ameer had asked for in 1869, and which he had ever since continued to desire.*

Sixthly, we have the fact that this Draft Treaty, with its intricate network of saving clauses, was not to be shown to the Ameer till after he had accepted the Viceroy's basis, or, in other words, till he had conceded to the British Government all it wanted.

Seventhly, we have the fact that the Viceroy endeavoured, in the meantime, by every device in his power, down even to the abuse of private friendship, to persuade the Ameer that the British Government was now offering to him conditions "in every particular the same as those desired by the Ameer himself on the occasion of his visit to Umballa in 1869, and again, in more or less general terms, so urged by him on the Government of India through his Minister, Noor Mohammed Khan, in 1873."†

Eighthly, we have the fact that the Viceroy, through the letter of Captain Grey to Noor Mohammed, tried still farther to enhance the value of his own offers by contrasting them with the "vacillation" of former Governments both in India and at home; which vacillation he ascribed to the absence of a

---

* Ibid., No. 19, paras. 9, 10, 11 and 45, pp. 93, 94, 96; also, Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 18, p. 182.

† Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 23, p. 187.

Treaty, and to the consequent "unfettered discretion" retained by Ministers and Viceroys.*

Lastly, we have the same Viceroy writing home to the Secretary of State that the concessions which that Minister had sanctioned, and which he himself had offered to the Ameer, "would not practically commit the British Government to anything more than a formal re-affirmation of the assurances already given by it, through Lord Mayo, to the Ameer in 1869."†

These transactions are but a fitting introduction to those which follow. If General Kaufmann had been detected in such a course of diplomacy towards any of the Khans of Central Asia, we know what sort of language would have been applied to it, and justly applied to it, in England.

---

* Afghan. Corresp., II., No. 3, pp. 9, 10.

† Afghan. Corresp. I., 1878, No. 36, para. 27, p. 168.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FROM THE PESHAWUR CONFERENCE IN JANUARY, 1877, TO THE WAR IN NOVEMBER, 1878.

THE great object of the British Envoy, from the first moment of the negotiations at Peshawur, was to fix upon the Ameer the position of an applicant for a new Treaty, in consequence of his dissatisfaction with the previous engagements of the British Government. Assuming him to occupy that position, it was easy to represent the new stipulations which he so much dreaded as necessary and natural conditions of what he desired.

It will be observed that this misrepresentation of the relative position of the two parties in the negotiation was part of the Viceroy's plan. His difficulty was this—that the British Government wanted to get something from the Ameer, whereas the Ameer did not want to get anything from the British Government, knowing, as he did, the price he would have to pay for it. The Viceroy felt the awkwardness of this position, and he determined to get over it, if he could, by the very simple experiment of pretending that the facts were other-

wise. In the 27th paragraph* of the Simla Narrative we have this policy explained under forms of language which but thinly veil its terrible unfairness. "The Ameer's apparent object was to place the British Government in the position of a petitioner; and that position it behoved the British Government to reverse." Yes,—if it could be done with truth. But the process of "reversing" facts is an awkward process. Sir Lewis Pelly did his best. He began at once by pretending that it was the Ameer, and not the British Government, who was desirous of some new arrangement.

Against this representation of the facts, from the first moments of the Conference, Noor Mohammed resolutely contended. He had one great advantage. Truth was on his side. The Ameer had indeed at one time wanted to get some things which had been refused him. But he had got other things which he still more highly valued, and he knew that the great aim of this new Viceroy was to get him to sacrifice what former Viceroys had granted, without really giving him what they had refused. The contention, therefore, that Shere Ali wanted this new Treaty, and was dissatisfied with the pledges he had already received from the British Government, was a contention not in accordance with the facts. Noor Mohammed saw at once the true aspect of the case, and the fallacious

* Afghan. Corresp. I., 1878, No. 36, p. 168.

pretexts which were put forward by Sir Lewis Pelly. The very foremost of these was a reference to the desires which Shere Ali had at first intimated at Umballa, but which he had abandoned before he quitted the presence of Lord Mayo. The Cabul Envoy would not hear of the allegation that the Ameer was dissatisfied with the promises of his old and firm friends, Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo, and that the engagements of those Viceroys had any need of being supplemented by the new proposals of Lord Lytton. He repelled with firmness every suggestion, every insinuation, every argument to this effect. It is, indeed, impossible not to admire the ability and the dignity with which Noor Mohammed, whilst labouring under a fatal and a painful disease, fought this battle of truth and justice, —in what he considered to be the interests of his master and the independence of his country.

From the first he took very high ground. At a private and unofficial meeting with the British Envoy on the 3rd of February, Sir Lewis Pelly said, on parting, that it would depend on the Ameer whether the Afghan Envoy's departure should prove as happy as he desired. The Afghan replied, "No, it depends on you;" and then, correcting himself, he added, with a higher and better pride, "In truth, it depends neither on you nor on the Ameer, but on justice."* And yet, when speaking as a private individual, he did not shrink

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 37, p. 198.

from admitting the dependent position of his Sovereign on account of the comparative weakness of his country. "Your Government," he said, at the close of the first meeting, to Sir Lewis Pelly, "is a great and powerful one: ours is a small and weak one. We have long been on terms of friendship, and the Ameer now clings to the skirt of the British Government, and till his hand be cut off he will not relax his hold of it."* But when speaking as the Envoy of the Ameer, and conducting the negotiations on his behalf, he spoke with a power and force which evidently caused great embarrassment to his opponent. Some of his simple questions must have been cutting to the quick. Thus, at the meeting on the 5th of February, he asked, "But if this Viceroy should make an agreement, and a successor should say, 'I am not bound by it'?" On this a remarkable scene occurred. The British Envoy, not liking apparently so direct a question, began to reply indirectly. Noor Mohammed at once interrupted—feeling, as he had a right to feel, that however inferior his master might be in power, he was the equal of the Viceroy in this contest of argument. The Afghan Envoy said he "wanted Yes or No." The British Envoy took refuge in evasion: "With the permission of the Afghan Envoy he would make his own remarks in the manner which might appear

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 35, p. 197.

to him to be proper." Again, Noor Mohammed asked, "Whether all the Agreements and Treaties, from the time of Sir John Lawrence and the late Ameer, up to the time of Lord Northbrook and the present Ameer, are invalid and annulled?"* And again, when Sir Lewis Pelly had replied that he had no authority to annul any Treaty, but to propose a supplementary Treaty to those already existing, the Afghan Envoy asked, "Supposing the present Viceroy makes a Treaty with us, and twenty years after he has gone, another Viceroy says he wishes to revise and supplement it, what are we to do?" To these home-thrusts Sir Lewis Pelly could only reply by insisting on the pretext that it was the Ameer who had expressed dissatisfaction—a reply which Noor Mohammed had no difficulty in disposing of by telling the British Envoy that if the Ameer was dissatisfied, it was "owing to transgression of previous agreements."† Again and again he repudiated any wish on the part of the Ameer to have a new Treaty. He had "returned from Umballa without anxiety."‡

At last, having maintained this contest with admirable spirit for several days, Noor Mahommed intimated that he desired an opportunity of setting forth his master's views in one continuous statement, during

* Ibid., Inclos. 38, p. 199. † Ibid., Inclos. 38, p. 199.
‡ Ibid., p. 200.

which he was not to be interrupted. Accordingly, this speech of the Afghan Envoy began on the 8th of February. The exhaustion of anxiety and of disease compelled him twice to stop, and to resume on another day. His statement, therefore, extended over three meetings, beginning on the 8th and ending on the 12th of February, 1877.

In this long argument he took his stand at once on the firm ground of claiming fidelity to the former engagements of the British Government. "If the authorities of the British Government have a regard for their own promises, and act upon them with sincerity, in accordance with the customary friendship which was formerly, and is now (what courtesy!), observed between the two Governments, there is no ground for any anxiety."* He cut off the pretext, which has since been repeated, both in the Simla Narrative and in its fellow, the London Narrative, that the Ameer had shown his desire to get some new Treaty, by sending his Envoy to meet Lord Northbrook in 1873. He reminded Sir Lewis Pelly that it was not the Ameer, but the Viceroy, who had sought that meeting. He repeated this twice, and asked, "The wishes, therefore, on whose part were they?" He objected to the garbled extracts which had been quoted to prove his master's dissatisfaction, and spoke with censure of "one paragraph of many paragraphs being brought

* Ibid., Inclos. 41, p. 203.

forward" to support erroneous interpretations. At great length, and with much earnestness, he contended that the Ameer had been satisfied by Lord Northbrook's confirmation of the assurances and promises of Lord Lawrence and of Lord Mayo, quoted a letter from the Ameer to this effect, and concluded an elaborate explanation on the subject by these words: "Therefore, till the time of the departure of Lord Northbrook, that previous course continued to be observed."* The only complaint he made of that Viceroy was his subsequent intercession on behalf of Yakoob Khan. But so far as regarded the assurances and engagements of the British Government, he wanted nothing in addition to those which had been concluded with Lord Lawrence and Lord Mayo.

On the third day of his laborious statement, the Cabul Envoy entered upon the question of questions—that of the reception of British officers. Here, again, he took his stand on the Treaty of 1857 and on the promises of Lord Mayo. He deprecated a course which would "scatter away former assurances." He declared that the people of Afghanistan "had a dread of this proposal, and it is firmly fixed in their minds, and deeply rooted in their hearts, that if Englishmen, or other Europeans, once set foot in their country, it will sooner or later pass out of their hands."† He referred to the

* Ibid., No. 42, p. 206.
† Ibid., No. 43, p. 208.

explanations given by the father of the present Ameer to Sir John Lawrence, and to the engagements of the Treaties of 1855 and of 1857. He referred to the ostensible object put forward by the British Envoy, that he wished to remove anxiety from the mind of the Ameer, and he asked whether the new proposals would not raise fresh anxiety, not only in his mind, but in the mind of all his people,* and he concluded by a solemn appeal to the British Government not to raise a question which would "abrogate the former Treaties and Agreements, and the past usage."†

In reply to these arguments, Sir Lewis Pelly, on the 13th of February, reminded the Ameer that although the Treaty of 1855 was still in force, and would be observed if no revised Treaty could be made, it did not bind the British Government to aid the Ameer against his enemies, whether foreign or domestic. If, therefore, the Ameer rejected the present offers, the Viceroy would "decline to support the Ameer and his dynasty in any troubles, internal or external," and would "continue to strengthen the frontier of British India, without further reference to the Ameer, in order to provide against probable contingencies."‡

It will be observed that this argument and intimation pointed very plainly to two things—first, to the

---

* Ibid., p. 208. † Ibid. p. 209.

‡ Ibid., p. 210.

fact that the British Envoy acknowledged no engagement or pledge to be binding except the Treaty of 1855. The pledges of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook were all treated as so much waste paper, or as still more wasted breath. And secondly, that the British Government considered itself at liberty to threaten adverse measures on the frontier. Noor Mohammed at once took alarm at both these intimations—asked what the last meant, and referred to the Treaty of 1857 as also binding. Sir Lewis Pelly gave replies that can only be considered as evasive. He declined to give definite explanations on either point.*

At the meeting on the 19th of February, the Afghan Envoy gave his rejoinder on the subject of the British officers in Afghanistan. He again referred to the promises of Lord Mayo. And as regarded the danger of any external aggression from Russia, he referred to the Agreement between England and Russia, and the formal and official communication which had been made to the Ameer upon that subject by the British Government. He insisted that, as regarded the obligations of the British Government, it was not fair to quote the Treaty of 1855 as standing by itself. It must be read in connexion with the writings and verbal assurances of three successive Viceroys, and in con-

* This intimation by Sir L. Pelly looks very like a pre-determination to rectify our "hap-hazard frontier" by picking a quarrel. It is not easy to see what other meaning it can have had.

nexion also with the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857.* That Article was of surviving force, and it required that any British Agent sent to Cabul should not be an European. The Government of Afghanistan would "never in any manner consent to acknowledge the abrogation of that Article." But all these engagements were not to be read separately, but as connected one with the other. "They are one," said the Envoy.* They constituted one continued series of engagements. He was very glad to hear of the desire of the Viceroy for the advantage of the Ameer. But it was "based upon such new and hard conditions, especially the residence of British officers upon the frontiers." Not once, but many times in the course of this Conference, the Afghan Envoy specified this demand—and not any demand for an Envoy at Cabul—as the one which he considered dangerous and objectionable. He said the Ameer had "not entrusted the protection of those frontiers from an external enemy to the English Government."

Sir Lewis Pelly had said that if the Ameer rejected his demand as to British officers, no basis was left for negotiations. In reference to this, "I beg to observe," said the Afghan, "in a friendly and frank manner, that the basis which has been laid for you by the wise arrangement of previous Councillors and Ministers of Her Majesty the Queen of England

* Ibid., p. 212.

in London, of Her Viceroys in India, after mature deliberation and thought, from time to time, during the course of all these past years, and has been approved of by Her Majesty the Queen, still exists." . . . "The Government of Afghanistan is certain that the British Government, of its own perfect honesty, will continue constant and stable to that firm basis."*

This was hard hitting. But it was hard hitting delivered with such perfect courtesy, that no just offence could be taken. But besides this, it was irrefutable argument. Sir Lewis Pelly had to take refuge in the coarse expedient which was alone possible under the circumstances, and which was alone consistent with his instructions. His basis was not accepted, and he declined to enter into controversy. He did, however, try to frighten the Ameer about Russia by asking the Envoy whether he had considered the conquests of Russia in the direction of Khiva, Bokhara, Kokhand, and the Turkoman border. He reminded Noor Mohammed (and this was fair enough) of the former expressions he had made use of in respect to apprehensions of Russia. He then declared "England has no reason to fear Russia." Noor Mohammed must have put his own estimate on the sincerity of this declaration. He could not have put a lower one than it deserved. But as Sir Lewis Pelly had nothing to reply to the weighty arguments Noor

* Ibid., p. 213.

Mohammed had used, and to the appeals to honourable feeling which he had made, the Afghan begged that they should be reported to the Viceroy, submitted to his consideration, and referred to his written decision. The Envoy would then be prepared either to give a final answer or to refer to the Ameer for further instructions.

It was not till the 15th of March—an interval of nearly a month—that Sir Lewis Pelly replied to the Afghan Envoy. This reply, I am afraid, must be considered as the reply of the Viceroy, as it is drawn up professedly upon his written instructions. It is very difficult to give any adequate account of this document: of its rude language—of its unfair representations of the Afghan Envoy's argument—of its evasive dealing with Treaties—of its insincere professions—of its insulting tone. There are, indeed, some excuses for the Viceroy. Brought up in the school of British Diplomacy, he must have felt himself beaten by a man whom he considered a Barbarian. This Barbarian had seen through his "ostensible pretexts," and his ambiguous promises. He had not, indeed, seen the Draft Treaty with its labyrinth of Saving Clauses. But our Agent at Cabul had been told enough to let Noor Mahommed understand what kind of a Treaty would probably be proposed. He had not been deceived by the letter of Captain Grey. The Afghan Minister had challenged, with only too much truth, the shifty way in which the Viceroy dealt with

the good faith of the British Crown, and the pledged word of former Viceroys. He had even dared to tell Lord Lytton's Envoy that he expected a plain answer to a plain question—Yes or No—whether he admitted himself to be bound by the pledges of his predecessors in office? He had done all this with the greatest acuteness, and with perfect dignity. All this was, no doubt, very hard to bear. But if irritation was natural, it was in the highest degree unworthy of the British Government to allow such irritation to be seen. If the Viceroy really considered the conduct of the Ameer, as then known or reported to him, as deserving or calling for the manifestation of such a spirit, it would have been far better to have no Conference at all. So far as the official language and conduct of the Ameer was concerned there was nothing to complain of. The language of his Envoy was in the highest degree courteous and dignified; and if Lord Lytton could not bear the severe reproaches which undoubtedly were of necessity involved in that Afghan's exposure of the Viceroy's case, it would have been better to avoid a contest in which the British Crown is represented at such signal disadvantage. Let us, however, examine the answer of the Viceroy a little nearer.

The impression which the Viceroy says he has derived from the first part of the Envoy's statement is an impression of regret that the Ameer should feel himself precluded from receiving a British Envoy at his Court, "by the rude and stationary condition in

which Afghanistan had remained under the administration of his Highness." Returning to this charge, the Viceroy adds that the "unsettled and turbulent condition of the Afghan population, and the comparative weakness of the sovereign power, however, appear to have increased rather than diminished, under the reign of his Highness."* Not only was this a gratuitous insult, even if it had been true, but it was an insult in support of which the Viceroy produced no evidence, because, as I believe, he had no evidence to produce.

The first approach to argument in reply to the Afghan Envoy is an assertion that the 7th clause of the Treaty of 1857 has "nothing whatever to do with the matters now under consideration."† This however, is mere assertion—no attempt is made to support it. It is an assertion, moreover, wholly inconsistent with the facts, and one which, as we shall presently see, it became necessary to retract.

The next assertion is that the Envoy had taken "so many pains to explain the reasons why the Ameer still declined to receive a British officer at Cabul," and had at the same time as "carefully avoided all references to the reception of British officers in other parts of Afghanistan." For this assertion there is absolutely no foundation whatever. The Afghan Envoy had not only repeatedly stated his objections as referring to the whole country of Afghanistan, but in the able

* Ibid., p. 214. † Ibid., p. 215.

argument of Noor Mohammed on the 19th February, which Lord Lytton was now professing to answer, and which it concerned the honour of the Crown that he should answer with some tolerable fairness, the Afghan Envoy had at least seven times specified the residence of British officers "on the frontiers" as the "chief proposal of the British Government."* Sir Lewis Pelly had, with equal precision, referred to this demand as the one to which the Envoy had objected.

The next assertion is that the British Government had been induced to believe both from events, and from many previous utterances both of Shere Ali and his father, that the advantages of British Residents in his dominions "would be cordially welcomed and gratefully appreciated by his Highness." Can anybody maintain that this is true? Is this a fair representation of the facts, even if Captain Grey's private memorandum-book be accepted as the only faithful record of Umballa?

The next assertion is that if the Ameer was unwilling, "the British Government had not the slightest desire to urge upon an unwilling neighbour an arrangement so extremely onerous to itself." Not content with this, the Viceroy goes the length of declaring that "the proposal of this arrangement was regarded by the British Government as a great concession."† Again, I ask, was this true? Could it

* Ibid., Inclos. 45, pp. 211-213. † Ibid., p. 216.

be said with any sincerity? Was it consistent with the despatches and instructions which have been examined in the preceding narrative?

Next we have a repetition of the unfounded assertion that the Envoy had elaborately answered a proposal which the British Government had not made, "and which he had no right to attribute to it," whilst he had left altogether unnoticed those proposals which alone he had been authorised to discuss.

The Viceroy has great difficulty in dealing with the telling and dignified passage of Noor Mohammed's speech in which he referred to existing obligations as the true basis for all further negotiations. Lord Lytton could only say that the existing Treaties being old, and not having been disputed by either party, afforded "no basis whatever for further negotiation." This was in direct contradiction with Sir Lewis Pelly's language at the previous meetings, in which he had spoken of the new Treaty as a supplement to those already existing. At the meeting held on the 5th of February, Sir Lewis Pelly had expressly declared that his authority was to propose "to revise and supplement the Treaty of 1855."*

The Viceroy then went on to say that if there was to be no new Treaty, the two Governments "must revert to their previous relative positions."† But as the Ameer seemed to misunderstand what that position was, Sir

* Ibid., p. 199. † Ibid., p. 216.

Lewis Pelly was instructed to remove a "dangerous misconception" from his mind. For this purpose he repeats at length the previous argument on the Treaty of 1855, that whilst it did bind the Ameer to be the friend of our friends, and the enemy of our enemies, it did not place the British Government under any obligation to render any assistance whatever to the Ameer. He then accumulates against the Ameer charges of unfriendliness, founded on the non-reception of Envoys, on ingratitude for subsidies, on refusals to let officers pass through his country, on alleged intentions of aggression on his neighbours, and, finally, on the reported attempt of the Ameer to get up a religious war. Some of these accusations mean nothing more than that the Ameer had stuck to the engagements of Lord Mayo. Others were founded on mere rumour, and the last referred to, was conduct on the part of the Ameer, which was the direct result of Lord Lytton's own violent conduct towards him, and which had been quite well known to the Viceroy before this Conference began.

The Viceroy then comes again to the Treaty of 1857, and is at last compelled to admit that the 7th Article is "the only one of all its articles that has reference to the conduct of general relations between the two Governments."* As, in a previous paragraph, he had said that the Treaty of 1857 had

* Ibid., p. 217.

"nothing whatever to do with the matters now under consideration;" and in another paragraph that the obligations contracted under it had "lapsed, as a matter of course, with the lapse of time,"* this was an important admission. But the Viceroy gets out of it by evading the force of the 7th Article altogether, through a construction of its meaning wholly different from the true one. The force of the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857 lies in this—that it stipulates for the complete withdrawal, not from Cabul, but from the whole of the Ameer's country, of "British officers," after the temporary purpose for which they were sent there had been accomplished. It is, therefore, a record of the permanent policy of the Rulers of Afghanistan not to admit British officers as Residents in any part of it, and a record also of the acquiescence of the British Government in that policy.

It is hardly credible, but it is the fact, that the Viceroy proceeds to argue on this Article as if it referred only to the reception of a British Envoy at the Capital —at Cabul itself. It almost looks as if the whole paper had been written without even looking at original documents—even so very short and simple an Instrument as the Treaty of 1857. "It is obvious," continues the Viceroy, "that no Treaty stipulation was required to oblige the British Government not to appoint a Resident British officer at Cabul without the

* Ibid., pp. 215, 216.

consent of the Ameer."* In the same vein Lord Lytton proceeds to argue that it could not bind the Ameer never at any future time or under any circumstances "to assent to the appointment of a Resident British officer at Cabul." All this is absolutely irrelevant, and has, to use his own previous words, "nothing whatever to do with the matters now under consideration."

The Viceroy then adds one argument which, I think, is sound, if strictly limited—namely, this, that there is nothing in the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857 "to preclude the British Government from pointing out at any time to the Ameer the advantage, or propriety, of receiving a British officer as its permanent Representative at Cabul, nor even from urging such an arrangement upon the consideration and adoption of his Highness in any fair and friendly manner."† Not only is this true, but I go farther and say that there is nothing even in the later pledges and engagements of Lord Mayo and of Lord Northbrook with the Ameer to prevent this kind of conduct. But the injustice of the conduct of Lord Lytton lay in this—that he was trying to force a new policy on the Ameer in a manner which was neither "fair nor friendly"—but, to use his own words, under threats of an "open rupture." We had, of course, a right to argue with the Ameer, and to persuade him,

* Ibid., p. 217. † Ibid., p. 218.

if we could, to let us off from our engagements. But what we had no right to do was precisely that which Lord Lytton had done and was then doing—namely, to threaten him with our displeasure if he did not agree to our new demands—and to support this threat with the most unjust evasions of the written and verbal pledges of former Viceroys.

But the Viceroy had not yet done with his strange perversion of the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857. He again assumes that it refers to the reception of an Envoy at Cabul. He says, tauntingly, that "it so happened that the British Government had not proposed, and did not propose, or intend to propose that arrangement. Consequently his Excellency's (the Cabul Envoy's) remarks on the Treaty of 1857 were not to the point, and did not need to be further noticed."*

Having thus got rid by misquotations of the real force and direct language of the Treaties of 1855 and of 1857, the Viceroy proceeds to declare broadly that "neither the one nor the other imposes on the British Government, either directly or indirectly, the least obligation or liability whatever, to defend, protect, or support the Ameer, or the Ameer's dynasty, against any enemy or any danger, foreign or domestic."

Lord Lytton next proceeds to deal with the pledges of preceding Viceroys. He refers to these as "certain

* Ibid., p. 218.

written and verbal assurances received by the Ameer in 1869, from Lord Mayo, and by his Highness's Envoy in 1873, from Lord Northbrook." He thus starts at once the distinction between Treaty engagements and the formal promises of the representative of the Crown in India. But he does more than this. This would not have been enough for the purposes of his argument.

It was necessary not only to put a new gloss on the promises of the British Government, but also to put a special interpretation on the claims of the Ameer. At the Simla Conferences, indeed, in 1873, the Ameer had shown a disposition to put an overstrained interpretation on previous promises. But Lord Northbrook had fully explained all the conditions and limitations which had uniformly been attached to them. Noor Mohammed, who now argued the case of the Ameer, was the same Envoy to whom these explanations had been addressed, and in the able and temperate representation which he had now made of his master's views he had made no extravagant claims whatever. It was this representation to which Lord Lytton was now replying, and he had no right to go back upon former misunderstandings, which had been cleared up, and to assume that they were still cherished by the Ameer. The Afghan Envoy had made no extravagant claim. This constituted Lord Lytton's difficulty. It would have been very difficult indeed to make out that the promises

and pledges of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook, taking them even at the lowest value, did not imply, directly or indirectly, "the least obligation to defend, protect, or support" the Ameer. But it was very easy, of course, to make out that they did not promise him an "unconditional support." At first, as we have seen, it had been Lord Lytton's object to fix on the Ameer a condition of discontent because Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had not given him assurances enough. It now became convenient to represent him, on the contrary, as so over-estimating those assurances as to claim them as having been unconditional. Accordingly, this representation of the facts is quietly substituted for the other, and the Ameer is assumed as having claimed this "unconditional support," which he had not claimed, and about which there had not been one word said in the whole course of Noor Mohammed's pleadings—except a single incidental observation*—the purport of which is not very clear, and which, if it had been noticed at all, should have been noticed as incidentally as it arose.

Having effected this substitution of the case to be proved and of the claim to be met, Lord Lytton proceeds at great length to argue from the circumstances under which the previous Viceroys had given their promises, that, in the first place, "these utterances," "whatever their meaning, and whatever

* Ibid., p. 206.

their purpose," were not "intended to have the force of a Treaty," and, in the second place, that they did not "commit the British Government to an unconditional protection of the Ameer." Having established this last proposition to his heart's content, he finds himself confronted with the task of describing what all the previous promises had meant and had amounted to. And here, at last, there is a gleam of fairness, like the sun shining for a moment through a thick bank of stormy clouds. They amounted, says the Viceroy, to neither more nor less than this:—"An assurance that, so long as the Ameer continued to govern his people justly and mercifully, and to maintain frank, cordial, and confidential relations with the British Government, that Government would, on its part also, continue to use every legitimate endeavour to confirm the independence, consolidate the power, and strengthen the Government of his Highness."*

The value, however, of this gleam of candour is much diminished by two circumstances, which are proved by the context. In the first place, the binding force of this "assurance" was destroyed by the careful explanation that it was not equivalent to a Treaty obligation. In the second place, it was implied that the refusal of the Ameer to accept the new condition of Resident British officers was in itself a departure from the "frank, cordial, and confidential relations"

* Ibid., p. 218.

which were represented to be among the conditions of the "assurance." The first of these circumstances, as affecting the Viceroy's definition, deprived the "assurance" of all value; whilst the second was in itself a direct breach of that assurance, inasmuch as the whole essence of them lay in the promise that the reception of British officers was not to be forced or pressed upon the Ameer by threats and punishments of this kind.

Lord Lytton next returns to the plan of representing the Ameer as disappointed at Simla by Lord Northbrook's refusal to give to him a Treaty, and argues that the "verbal assurances" of that Viceroy could not be interpreted as assuming in favour of the Ameer those very liabilities which had been refused in the Treaty. Of course not; and Noor Mohammed had never made any such allegation.

The Viceroy then proceeds to represent himself as simply the giver of all good things—as offering to the Ameer what he had vainly solicited from others. Not very consistently with this, he refers to the acceptance of his conditions as a proof of "sincerity" on the part of the Ameer, thus admitting, by implication, that their acceptance was an object of desire to the British Government. And yet, not to let this admission stand, he declares that the "British Government does not press its alliance and protection upon those who neither seek nor appreciate them." The Viceroy then retires in a tone of offended

dignity, and of mortified benevolence. He harboured "no hostile designs against Afghanistan." He had "no conceivable object, and certainly no desire, to interfere in their domestic affairs." The British Government would scrupulously continue to respect the Ameer's authority and independence. But in the last sentence there is a sting. The promise it contains is carefully, designedly, limited to "Treaty stipulations," which, in the opinion of Lord Lytton, did not include the most solemn written and verbal pledges of the representatives of the Crown in India. So long as the Ameer remained faithful to "Treaty stipulations" which the Envoy had referred to, "and which the British Government fully recognised as still valid, and therefore binding upon the two contracting parties," he "need be under no apprehension whatever of any hostile action on the part of the British Government."*

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings with which the Envoy of the unfortunate Ameer must have received this communication of the Viceroy. He must have felt—as every unprejudiced man must feel who reads it—that he was dealing with a Government very powerful and very unscrupulous,—too angry and too hot in the pursuit of its own ends to quote with even tolerable fairness, the case which he had put before it,—and determined at any cost to force con-

* Ibid., p. 220.

cessions which he and his Sovereign were convinced must end in the destruction of the independence of their country. During the month he had been waiting for the answer of the Viceroy, his sickness had been increasing. When he did get it, he probably felt under the heavy responsibility of finally deciding whether he was to yield or not. His master, who had probably been kept informed of the tone and of the demands of Sir Lewis Pelly, had become more and more incensed by the treatment he was receiving, and he was acting as most men do when they are driven to the wall. Noor Mohammed made some despairing attempts to reopen the discussion with Sir Lewis Pelly. But that Envoy told him that his orders were imperative to treat no more unless the "basis" were accepted. "The Viceroy's communication" (with all its misquotations) "required only a simple Yes or No." Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that within ten days of the receipt of the Viceroy's message, Noor Mohammed had "gained time" in another world. The Cabul Envoy died on the 26th of March.

And now a very remarkable transaction occurred, the knowledge of which we derive and derive only from the Simla Narrative.* It appears that the Ameer, either after hearing of the death of his old Minister, or from knowing that he was extremely ill, had determined to send another Envoy to Peshawur,

* Ibid., No. 36, para. 36, pp. 170, 171.

and it was reported to the Viceroy that this Envoy would have authority to accept eventually all the conditions of the British Government. Lord Lytton himself tells us that he knew all this before the 30th of March; on which day he senta hasty telegram to Sir Lewis Pelly to "close the Conference immediately," on the ground that the basis had not been accepted. And so eager was the Viceroy to escape from any chance of being caught even in the wily offers which he had made to the Ameer, that it was specially added in the telegram that if new Envoys or messengers had arrived in the meantime, the refusal of farther negotiations was still to be rigidly maintained.* The ostensible reason given for this determination is not very clear or intelligible. It is that "liabilities which the British Government might properly have contracted on behalf of the present Ameer of Cabul, if that Prince had shown any eagerness to deserve and reciprocate its friendship, could not be advantageously, or even safely, accepted in face of the situation revealed by Sir Lewis Pelly's energetic investigations." That is to say, that, having driven the Ameer into hostility of feeling by demands which had all along been known to be most distasteful, and even dreadful, in his sight, the Viceroy was now determined to take advantage of this position of affairs, not only to withdraw all the boons he had professed to offer, but

* Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 52, p. 222.

to retire with the great advantage of having shaken off, like the dust of his feet, even the solemn pledges and promises which the Ameer had obtained from former Viceroys. There was another result of this proceeding which Lord Lytton seems to admit that he foresaw, and which, from the language in which he refers to it, he does not seem to have regarded with any regret. That result was that Shere Ali would be thrown of necessity into the arms of Russia. "Seeing," says Lord Lytton, "no immediate prospect of further support from the British Government, and fearing, perhaps, the consequences of its surmised resentment, he would naturally become more urgent in his advances towards Russia."* This, therefore, was the acknowledged result of the policy of the Government—a result which the Viceroy was not ashamed to acknowledge as one which he regarded, if not with satisfaction, at least with indifference. This feeling could only arise, so far as I can see, from a deliberate desire to fix a quarrel on the Ameer, and then to obtain by violence the objects which he had failed to secure by the proceedings we have now traced.

One important circumstance connected with the conduct and policy of the Viceroy at this moment does not appear, so far as I can find, in the papers presented to Parliament, and that is, that he withdrew

* Ibid., para. 37, p. 171.

our Native Agent from Cabul—or, in other words, suspended all diplomatic intercourse with the Ameer, after the Peshawur Conference. This measure, indeed, seems to have been most carefully concealed from public knowledge both in India and at home. Few parts of the London Narrative are more disingenuous than the 18th paragraph,* which professes to give an account of the conduct of the Government on the close of the Conference at Peshawur. It says that no course was open to Her Majesty's Government "but to maintain an attitude of vigilant reserve." It refers, moreover, to the "imperfect means of obtaining information" from Cabul after that event, without even hinting that this imperfection was due entirely to the deliberate action of the Government in withdrawing its Native Agent. All this indicates a consciousness that it was a step to be concealed, and a thing to be ashamed of. And so, indeed, it was. Lord Lytton had no right to fix a quarrel on the Ameer because he had refused to accept what the Viceroy declared to be nothing but concessions in his favour. The rupture of diplomatic relations was in direct breach of the intimation which had been previously made at that Conference—that if the Ameer refused the basis, our relations with him would revert to the footing on which they stood before. If this course had been followed, some

* Ibid., No. 73, p. 264.

amends would have been made for the unjustifiable attempt to force the Ameer by threats of our displeasure to give up his right to the fulfilment of our engagements. But this course was not followed. Our relations with him were not restored to the former footing. Not only was our Agent withdrawn, but, as I have been informed, there was an embargo laid on the export of arms from our frontiers to the Kingdom of Cabul. All this must have tended to alarm Shere Ali, and to give him the impression that he had nothing to hope from us except at a price ruinous to the independence of his Kingdom. It amounted to an official declaration of estrangement, if not of actual hostility. It left the Government of India without any means of knowing authentically what was going on at Cabul, and it must have given an impression to the Ameer that we had deliberately cast him off.

After all the inaccurate statements which have been already exposed, it seems hardly worth while to point out that the Simla Narrative is particularly loose in its assertions respecting the circumstances of this Conference at Peshawur. For example, it states that "owing to the Envoy's increasing ill-health, several weeks were occupied in the delivery of this long statement."* The fact is that the Conferences began on the 30th of January, 1877, and that the Afghan

* Ibid., para. 32, p. 170.

Envoy's long statement was concluded on the 12th of February.* Even this period of twelve days was not occupied by the Envoy's "long statement," but, in a great measure, by Sir Lewis Pelly's arguments and explanations. The "long statement" of the Afghan Envoy occupied only three days—the 8th, the 10th, and the 12th of February. The two next meetings of the 15th and 19th of February were chiefly occupied by the arguments of the British Envoy; whilst the period of nearly one month from that date to the 15th of March was occupied by Lord Lytton himself in concocting the remarkable reply of that date.

There is one very curious circumstance connected with the time when Lord Lytton was on the point of closing the Peshawur Conference which does not appear in the papers presented to Parliament. On the 28th of March, 1877, two days after the death of the Afghan Envoy, and something less than two days before the Viceroy sent the imperative order to close the door against further negotiation, there was a meeting at Calcutta of the Legislative Council of India. This is a body before which Viceroys sometimes take the occasion of making speeches for public information. Lord Lytton did so on this occasion, and went out of his way to express his sympathy with the Indian Press in knowing so little of the policy of the Government.

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, No. 36, Inclos. 43, p. 207.

But there was one thing, he said, which the Viceroy could do to mitigate this evil. This was to waive "official etiquette, and seize every opportunity which comes within his reach to win confidence by showing confidence, and to dispel fictions by stating facts." In illustration of this, he gave an account of his policy towards the Ameer, and of the Conference just concluded at Peshawur. He told them that he had "invited the Ameer to a friendly interchange of views," and had "complied also with the suggestion made to us by his Highness that Envoys on the part of the two Governments should meet at Peshawur for this purpose." He did not tell them that he had bullied the Ameer into this suggestion as the only means he had of postponing or of evading demands which were new, violent, and in breach of former promises. He told them that the Conference had been "prematurely terminated by a sad event"—the death of the Cabul Envoy. He did not tell them that he was himself on the point of closing the Conference in order to prevent a new Envoy coming. He told them that his policy was to maintain, as the strongest frontier which India could have, a belt of frontier States, "by which our advice is followed without suspicion, and our word relied on without misgiving, because the first has been justified by good results, and the second never quibbled away by timorous sub-intents or tricky saving clauses." Surely this is the most extra-

ordinary speech ever made by a Viceroy of India. At whom was he speaking, when he talked of "sub-intents" and "tricky saving clauses?" Of whom could he be thinking? What former Viceroy had ever been even accused of such proceedings? We seem to be dealing here with a veritable psychological phenomenon. If he had read to the Council the Ninth and Tenth Articles of the Draft Treaty which he had just been preparing for the Ameer of Cabul, together with the "Secret and Subsidiary Explanatory Agreement,"—then, and then only, the Legislative Council of India would have understood the extraordinary observations which were thus addressed to them.*

The Simla Narrative of these events is dated the 10th of May, and was, therefore, drawn up within about six weeks of the close of the Conferences at Peshawur. It is important to observe the view which it expresses of the final result of the Viceroy's policy and proceedings in reference to our relations with Afghanistan. It speaks with complete, and no doubt deserved, contempt of the passionate designs to which our violence towards him had driven the Ameer. It admits that the whole movement had collapsed even before the Conferences had been summarily

* Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, &c., 28th March, 1877. These Abstracts are, I believe, published in India.

closed, and that the Ameer had sent a reassuring message to the authorities and population of Candahar, on the subject of his relations with the British Government. The truth, therefore, seems to be that the moment the Indian Government ceased to threaten him with the hated measure of sending British officers into his country, his disposition to be friendly returned, thus plainly indicating that any danger of hostility on his part arose solely from our attempts to depart from our previous engagements with him.* The next thing to be observed in the Simla Narrative is this—that the Viceroy and his Council did not pretend to be alarmed, or, indeed, to have any fears whatever of external aggression. On the contrary, they declared that whatever might be the future of Cabul politics, they would "await its natural development with increased confidence in the complete freedom and paramount strength of our own position."†

This is an accurate account—as far as it goes—of that estimate of our position in India which had inspired the policy of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook. Lord George Hamilton complained, in the late debate in the House of Commons, that he could find no Despatch in the India Office setting forth the view which I

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, para. 38, p. 171.
† Ibid., para. 40, p. 172.

had taken as Secretary of State on the Central Asian Question.* I had no need to write any such Despatch, because the policy of the Cabinet was in complete harmony with the conduct and the policy of Lord Lawrence, of Lord Mayo, and of Lord Northbrook. In Europe that policy was represented by the Despatches of the Foreign Office. But if I had felt called upon to write a formal Despatch on the Central Asian Question it would have been based upon that confidence in the paramount strength of our own position which Lord Lytton expresses in the paragraph which I have just quoted. It would have been written, however, under this difference of circumstances—that the confidence expressed would have been sincere, and in harmony with our actual conduct. The sincerity of it in Lord Lytton's case had serious doubts thrown upon it by the desperate efforts he had just been making to persuade the Ameer of Cabul to let us off from our engagements on the subject of British officers, and by the transparent insincerity of his repeated declarations that all these efforts were for Shere Ali's benefit, and not for our own.

As for the Government at home, it was necessary for them, at this time, to keep very quiet. They care-

* The policy of the Government on the Central Asian Question was more than once stated and defended in the House of Commons, by my honourable friend, Mr. Grant Duff, with all the knowledge which his ability and his indefatigable industry enabled him to bring to bear upon the subject.

fully concealed everything that had happened. It was on the 15th of June, 1877, that I asked certain questions in the House of Lords upon the subject. The impression left upon my mind by the reply was that nothing of any importance had occurred. Private and authentic information, indeed, of which I was in possession, prevented me from being altogether deceived. But I hoped that it might at least be the desire of the Cabinet to restrain Lord Lytton. Certainly, nothing could be more misleading as to the past than the answers I received. There had been a Conference at Peshawur, but it had been arranged at the Ameer's own request. There had been no attempt to force an Envoy on the Ameer "at Cabul." Our relations with the Ameer had undergone no material change since last year. All this was very reassuring, and whatever may now be said or thought of the accuracy of the information which these replies afforded to Parliament, this at least is to be gained from them, that at that time, which was two months and a half after the close of the Peshawur Conference, no alarm whatever was felt as to the disposition or conduct of the Ameer. Now that we had withdrawn our proposal to send Envoys, and had abstained from threatening him, all was going comparatively well.

But farther evidence on this important point is to be found at a much later date, and from the same authoritative source of information. The time came when the

Indian Secretary had to review officially Lord Lytton's proceedings. This was done in a Despatch, dated October 4, 1877. In it Lord Salisbury dealt almost lightly with the whole subject,—dwelt upon the fact that there were "already indications of a change for the better in the attitude of the Ameer,"—trusted the improvement would continue,—and indicated that this end would be "most speedily attained by abstention for the present, on the one hand, from any hostile pressure on his Highness, and, on the other, from any renewed offer of the concessions which have been refused."*

This important declaration by Lord Salisbury establishes a complete separation and distinction between the Afghan Question as directly connected with the politics of India, and the Afghan Question as it came to be revived in an aggravated form by the action and policy of the Cabinet in support of Turkey.

In the meantime, as we all know, great events had happened. From the date of Lord Salisbury's Despatch of the 4th of October, 1877, reviewing the situation after the Conference at Peshawur, to the 7th of June, 1878, when the first rumour of the Russian Mission to Cabul reached the Viceroy, we have not a scrap of information as to what had been going on in India in the papers presented to Parliament by the India Office. There is thus a complete hiatus of eight

* Ibid., No. 37, para. 9, p. 224.

months, for the history of which we must go to the papers connected with the Eastern Question in Europe, and to what are called "the ordinary sources of information." Some of these are at least as worthy of confidence as the narratives and the denials of the Government, and the main facts of the succeeding history are not open to dispute.

The Russian Declaration of War against Turkey had followed close upon the termination of the Conference at Peshawur. Early in October, when Lord Salisbury wrote the Despatch just quoted, the fortunes of the Russian campaign were doubtful both in Europe and in Asia. Probably this contributed to the spirit of comparative composure which inspires that paper, and which contrasts so much with the nervous fears apparent in the Afghan policy which had so completely failed.

But soon after Lord Salisbury's Despatch of October 4th, 1877, the tide had turned both in Europe and in Western Asia, and, when it did turn, the reverse current came in as it does on the sands of Solway or of Dee. The Turks were defeated: Kars was taken: Plevna fell: the Balkans were crossed: and the armies of Russia poured into the Roumelian plains. There is reason to believe that the agitation of the Government at home communicated itself to their representative in India. Long before this, as we have seen, he had begun to play at soldiers, he had been accumulating forces on the frontiers, building a bridge of boats upon the Indus,

inciting border Governments to aggressive movements on or beyond their own frontier, and formally occupying Quetta,—not in connexion with any mere Khelat disturbance, but as a part of a new Imperial policy. All round, it had been a policy of fuss and fear, giving indications that the obscure threat of Sir Lewis Pelly at Peshawur would be carried into effect—namely, that the British Government would adopt some new measure on the frontier which would be regardless of the interests of Afghanistan. The tongue of the Indian press was let loose upon the subject, and the Indian mind was agitated by the expectation of great movements and bold designs.

Some of these were soon known to, or surmised by, Russia. Colonel Brackenbury, the military correspondent of the *Times*, who crossed the Balkans with the force of General Gourko in July, 1877, tells us the following curious story :—"One day in Bulgaria, I think it was the day when Gourko's force captured the Shipka, and we met young Skobeloff on the top of the Pass, that brilliant and extraordinary young General said to me suddenly, 'Have you any news from India?' I replied that the Russian postal authorities took care that I had no news from anywhere. His answer was, 'I cannot find out what has become of that column of 10,000 men that has been organised by your people to raise Central Asia against us.'" Possibly the rumour which had reached the Russian General may have been at that time un-

founded. Perhaps it may have ranked with the "baggage-animal" rumours against Shere Ali, of which Lord Lytton made so much. But there is reason to believe that if not then, at least at a somewhat later period, the busy brains which were contemplating a call on Eastern troops "to redress the balance of the West," had it also in contemplation, as part of the Imperial policy, to make some serious military movement against Russia beyond the frontiers of India. There is a well-known connexion between the *Pioneer*, an Indian Journal, and the Government of India. In the number of that paper, dated September 4th, 1878, there appeared a letter, dated Simla, August 28th, which stated that in anticipation of a war with Russia, it was no secret that an army of 30,000 men had been prepared in India, with the intention of forcing its way through Afghanistan, and attacking the Russian dominions in Central Asia. Considering that on a much more recent occasion, as I shall presently show, Lord Lytton, or his Government, seems to have communicated at once to the correspondents of the press the orders sent to him by the Cabinet, on the subject of his final dealings with the Ameer, it is not at all improbable that the writer of this letter in the *Pioneer* had authentic information. The British Government was, of course, quite right to take every measure in its power to defeat Russia if it contemplated the probability of a war with that Power. It is notorious

that such a war was anticipated as more or less probable during the whole of the year previous to the signature of the Treaty of Berlin. All the well-known steps taken by the Government in the way of military preparation had reference to that contingency, and there is nothing whatever improbable that among those preparations, the scheme referred to in the *Pioneer* had been planned.

But if the Government of England had a perfect right to make such preparations, and to devise such plans, it will hardly be denied that Russia had an equal right to take precautions against them. It is true she had an engagement with us not to interfere in Afghanistan. But it will hardly be contended that she was to continue to be bound by this engagement when the Viceroy of India was known or believed to be organising an attack upon her, of which Afghanistan was to be the base. The letter written at Simla, to which I have referred above, expressly states that the Russian Mission to Cabul was sent under the apprehension of such a movement, and having for its object to bribe Shere Ali to oppose our progress. Sir Henry Rawlinson, in his Article in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1878, professes to give an account in some detail of the proceedings of Russia in connexion with the Cabul Mission. He does not give his authorities; but, as he has better sources of information than most other men upon this subject, we may take that account as the nearest

approximation to the truth at which we can arrive at present. He takes no notice of the intentions of the Indian Government to attack Russia. But his whole narrative shows that the Russian movements, of which the Mission to Cabul was only one part, were of a defensive character, and in anticipation of a war with England. He says that they were a mere "tentative demonstration against the Afghan frontier,"—that "the force was totally inadequate to any serious aggressive purpose,"—and that the military expeditions were abandoned when the signature of the Treaty of Berlin removed the danger of war.* It is well worthy of observation, as I have already pointed out, that of the three military movements then contemplated by Russia, two were movements directed from territories over which she had acquired command between 1864 and 1869, or in other words, before the Umballa Conferences. The main column was to start from Tashkend, and move by Samarkand to Jám. The right flanking column alone was to move from a point in the former territories of Khiva, whilst the left column was to be directed from the borders of Kokhand, upon the Oxus near Kunduz, crossing the mountains which buttress the Jaxartes Valley to the south. The whole force did not exceed 12,000 men. Such was the terrible danger to which our Indian Empire was exposed.

* *Nineteenth Century*, No. 22, pp. 982, 983.

The Peace of Berlin stopped the whole movement. It has been stated that the Mission proceeded to Cabul after that event was known. But as the Treaty of Berlin was not signed till the 13th of July, and as the Russian Envoy is stated by the Viceroy to have been received in Durbar by the Ameer, at Cabul, on the 26th of July,* it is obviously impossible that this can be correct. Sir Henry Rawlinson, indeed, places the arrival of the Russian Envoy on the 10th of August, but he admits in a note that this date is uncertain. Even if it were correct, it would by no means follow that the Treaty of Berlin had been heard of by the Russian authorities in Central Asia before that time.

We may therefore take it as certain that the whole of the Russian proceedings, including the Mission, were taken in connexion with a policy of self-defence, and that the Mission to Cabul was a direct and immediate consequence, not of any pre-conceived design on the part of Russia to invade India, or gratuitously to break her engagement with us in respect to Afghanistan, but of the threatening policy of the British Cabinet in Europe, and of its intention, in pursuance of that policy, to make India the base of hostile operations against Russia.

This being so, let us now look at the position in which we had placed the Ameer. We had treated him, as I have shown, not only with violence, but

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, No. 61, p. 231.

with bad faith. We had formally declared that we owed him nothing in the way of assistance or defence against any enemy, foreign or domestic. We had founded this declaration on unjust and disingenuous distinctions between Treaty engagements, and the solemn promises, whether written or verbal, of former Viceroys. We had withdrawn our Agent from his Capital. We had thrown out ambiguous threats that we should direct our frontier policy without any reference to his interests or his wishes.

In spite of all this, there is no proof that the Ameer had the slightest disposition to invite or even welcome the agents of Russia. On the contrary, all the evidence of any value goes to show that he was quite as jealous of Russian officers as he was of British officers coming to his country. Our own Agent had told Lord Lytton that this was the real condition of his mind just before the Peshawur Conference, and there had been distinct indications of the truth of this opinion in the language of the Ameer just before that Conference. It was consistent with the frame of mind of the Viceroy to believe against the Ameer every rumour which came to him through his secret agents, of whom we know nothing, and the truth of whose accounts is very probably on a par with that of the dealer in "baggage animals" whose narrative has been quoted on a previous page.

In spite of all this, there is the best reason to believe that the Ameer received the intimation of the ap-

proaching Russian Mission with sincere annoyance and alarm. There are indications of it, but only indications of it, in the papers presented to Parliament. One of our spies, a native doctor, had heard the Ameer tell his Minister that the Russian Envoy had crossed the Oxus on his way to Cabul, "refusing to be stopped."* The Ameer had sent orders to cease the opposition, but this report does not say under what amount of pressure, or with what degree of reluctance. Major Cavagnari, however, dating from Peshawur, on the 21st of July, expressly says: "Chetan Shah has arrived. He corroborates the intelligence I have recently reported regarding Russian pressure on the Ameer, and military preparations in Trans-Oxus."†

I must at once express my opinion that under whatever circumstances or from whatever motives the Russian Mission was sent and was received, it was impossible for the British Government to acquiesce in that reception as the close of our transactions with the Ameer upon the subject of Missions to his Court. We cannot allow Russia to acquire predominant, or even co-equal, influence with ourselves in Afghanistan. The Cabinet was therefore not only justified in taking, but they were imperatively called upon to take, measures to ascertain the real object of that Mission, and if it had any political character,

* Ibid., No. 42, p. 227.
† Ibid., No. 48, Inclos. p. 229.

to secure that no similar Mission should be sent again.

But considering that under the circumstances which have been narrated, the sending of the Mission could only be considered a war measure on the part of Russia, and had arisen entirely out of circumstances which threatened hostilities between the two countries,—considering farther, that, as regarded the reception of the Mission, we had ourselves placed the Ameer in a position of extreme difficulty, and had reason to believe and to know that he was not in any way party to the Russian policy in sending it,—justice absolutely demanded, and our own self-respect demanded, that we should proceed towards the Ameer with all the dignity of conscious strength, and of conscious responsibility for the natural results of our own previous conduct and policy.

There is, I am happy to acknowledge, some evidence that at the last moment the Cabinet at home did feel some compunction on account of the crisis which they had brought about. There is no evidence that the Viceroy felt any. He was all for instant measures of threat and of compulsion. But as the last steps in this sad and discreditable history are only in too complete accordance with those which had gone before, I must give them in some detail.

Lord Lytton, by his own act, in withdrawing our native Agent from Cabul, had placed the Government of India in the position of being without any authentic

information from that Capital. It could only hear of what might be going on through spies of untrustworthy character, or by rumour and report. The first rumours of the approach of a Russian Mission, and of the mobilisation of Russian forces in Turkestan, reached the Government of India from the 7th to the 19th of June, 1878.* But it was not till after the lapse of another month, on the 30th and 31st of July,† that any definite information was obtained. Even then, it does not seem to have been very accurate, but it was certain that a Russian officer of high rank, with a large escort, had made his way to Cabul, and had been received there.

It will be observed that this period of nearly two months was exactly the period during which we passed in Europe from the imminent danger of a war with Russia to the probability of peace. The Salisbury-Schouvalow agreement was only signed on the 30th of May, and nothing of it could be known in India or in Turkestan early in June. But before the end of July the Treaty of Berlin had been signed, and peace with Russia was assured. This was the condition of things when, on the 30th of July, Lord Lytton telegraphed that he had certain information of the arrival and of the importance of the Russian Mission. It is only due to Lord Lytton to

* Ibid., Nos. 39, 40, p. 226.
† Ibid., No. 42, p. 229.

point out that he saw, and that he raised, the obvious question whether, now that peace with Russia was assured, the Russian Mission should not be dealt with directly between the Cabinet of London and the Russian Government, rather than indirectly between the Government of India and the Ameer of Cabul. He did not recommend the first of these two courses rather than the last—that was hardly his business. But he did suggest it. The Cabinet, however, simply replied by telling him to make sure of his facts in the first place.* On the 2nd of August Lord Lytton proposed† that the Government of India should insist on the reception at Cabul of a British Mission, pointing out that now we might probably secure all our previous demands without paying for them any price in the shape of "dynastic obligations."

On the 3rd this course was approved by the Cabinet.‡

Accordingly, on the 14th of August, the Viceroy wrote a letter to the Ameer intimating that a British Mission would be sent to Cabul, in the person of Sir Neville Chamberlain, who was to visit his Highness "immediately at Cabul," to converse with him on urgent affairs touching the course of recent events at Cabul, and in the countries bordering on Afghanistan.§ This letter was sent in advance by a native gentleman, Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan.

---

* Ibid., No. 43, p. 228. † Ibid., No. 45, p. 228.
‡ Ibid., No. 46, p. 229. § Ibid., No 49, Inclos. 4, p. 232.

Within three days after this letter was written, an important event happened at Cabul. On the 17th of August the Ameer lost his favourite son, Abdoolah Jan. If the unfortunate Ameer had been perturbed by the conduct of the Indian Government, if he had been still further troubled by the necessity of receiving a Russian Mission, this bereavement must have completed the miseries of his position. When Lord Lytton heard of this event on the 26th of August,* he was obliged, out of decency, to arrange for the postponement of Sir Neville Chamberlain's departure, so that the Mission should not reach Cabul until after the expiry of the customary mourning of forty days. A second letter was also sent to the Ameer, being a letter of condolence. The intention here was good, but unfortunately it was hardly carried into effect. Lord Lytton's impatience could not be restrained, and indeed he confessed that he did not think it expedient to relax preparations for the speedy departure of the Mission "beyond what was decorous."† The decorum seems to have consisted in spending as many as possible of the forty days in despatching a perfect fire of messages through every conceivable channel, all of them in a more or less imperious tone. The Ameer was plied with threats through native Agents that the Mission would leave Peshawur on the 16th of September, so as to time the probable arrival at Cabul

* Ibid., No. 50, p. 233. † Ibid., No. 50, p. 233.

as exactly as possible at the end of the forty days, whilst at the same time he was informed that resistance or delay would be considered as an act of "open hostility." Moreover, these fiery messages were repeated to the subordinate officers of Shere Ali at the forts and citadels on the road—so that no indignity might be spared to the unfortunate Ameer.*

It must be remembered that all this was being transacted at a time when it was known that the Russian Envoy had himself left Cabul on or about the 25th of August,† leaving only some members of the Mission behind, and when it was quite certain that no hostile movement on the part of Russia could be contemplated, or was possible. But this is not all. The Viceroy's messenger, Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan, reached Cabul on the 10th of September, and on the 17th Sir Neville Chamberlain was able to report from Peshawur the result of the first interview with the Ameer. From this it clearly appeared that Shere Ali did not intend to refuse to receive a Mission. What he objected to was the "harsh words" and the indecent haste. "It is as if they were come by force. I do not agree to the Mission coming in this manner, and until my officers have received orders from me, how can the Mission come? It is as if they wish to

---

* Afghan. Corresp., II., 1878, pp. 16, 17.

† Ibid., No. 51, p. 234.

disgrace me. I am a friend as before, and entertain no ill-will. The Russian Envoy has come, and has come with my permission. I am still afflicted with grief at the loss of my son, and have had no time to think over the matter." On the following day, the 18th of September, Sir Neville Chamberlain reported a farther message from Nawab Hussein Khan, that he had been assured by the Minister of the Ameer, on his oath, that "the Ameer intimated that he would send for the Mission in order to clear up mutual misunderstandings, provided there was no attempt to force the Mission without his consent being first granted according to usual custom, otherwise he would resist it, as coming in such a manner would be a slight to him." He complained of the false reports against him from news writers. He denied having invited the Russian Mission. "He believed a personal interview with the British Mission would adjust misunderstandings." Some of the Russians were detained by sickness in Cabul. The Nawab thought that the Russians would soon be dismissed, and that the Ameer would then send for the British Mission.*

To all this the Viceroy replied by telegraph, on the 19th of September, that it made no change in the situation, and that the preconcerted movements of Sir Neville Chamberlain should not be delayed.† If the Government wanted war—if they now saw their

* Ibid., pp. 242-3. † Ibid., p. 243.

opportunity of getting by force what they had failed in getting by a tortuous diplomacy—then they were quite right. There was not a moment to be lost. It was evident that at any moment, and in all probability at the end of the forty days, a message might be received taking away all excuse for threats. But if the Government wanted peace, then nothing could be more violent and unjust than their proceedings, nor could anything be more frivolous than the pretexts they put forward. It is said that the Ameer's object was "to keep the Mission waiting indefinitely." It did not stand well in the mouth of the Viceroy to attribute "ostensible pretexts" to others—whose only crime was that they had been able to detect his own. There was no evidence and no probability that the Ameer desired an indefinite postponement. It was only reasonable and natural that he should wish to see the Russian Mission finally cleared out of his Capital before he received the British Mission. And if any inconvenience arose from the Mission having been already sent to Peshawur, that inconvenience was entirely due to the blundering which had sent it there in such unnecessary and unreasonable haste.

And so—casting aside all decorum as well as all justice—the Mission was advanced to Ali Musjid on the 21st of September,—five or six days before the expiry of the forty days of mourning,—and there, as is well known, by orders of the Ameer it was stopped.

Following on this, on the 19th of October, a letter

from the Ameer was received, complaining of the "harsh and breathless haste" with which he had been treated, and of the "hard words, repugnant to courtesy and politeness," which had been addressed to himself and to his officers.* The Viceroy now at once telegraphed to the Government at home that "any demand for apology would now, in my opinion, be useless, and only expose us to fresh insult, whilst losing valuable time." He proposed an immediate declaration of war, and an immediate advance of troops into Afghanistan.†

This was on the 19th of October. The Cabinet replied on the 25th that they did not consider matters to be then "ripe for taking all the steps" mentioned in the Viceroy's telegram. They were of opinion that, before crossing the frontiers of Afghanistan, "a demand, in temperate language, should be made for an apology, and acceptance of a permanent British Mission within the Afghan frontiers, and that a reply should be demanded within a time sufficient for the purpose."‡ In the meantime military preparations were to be continued.

It will be observed that in this reply the Cabinet took advantage of the position to put forward a demand on the Ameer not merely to receive a Mission, but to admit a permanent Mission, and to do

* Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, No. 61, p. 263.
† Ibid., No. 64, p. 253. ‡ Ibid., No. 65, p. 264.

this without offering to Shere Ali any one of the countervailing advantages which, before, they had professed a willingness to bestow upon him.

A gap—an interval of five days—here occurs in the papers presented to Parliament. Between the telegram of the 25th and the Ultimatum Letter to the Ameer dated the 30th October, there is nothing to show what was going on. But this gap is in a measure supplied from a singular source of information. On the 1st of November a long telegram was published by the *Daily News* from its well-known correspondent at Simla, which professes to give an account of what had been done, and was then being done, both by the Viceroy and by the Cabinet at home. This account is confirmed by the papers subsequently presented to Parliament, in so far as it relates to particulars which are traceable in them. It is, therefore, a reasonable presumption that the same account is not altogether erroneous as regards those other particulars which cannot be so verified. Whether it is perfectly accurate or not, it gives a striking picture of the atmosphere which prevailed at the head-quarters of the Government of India, and is a signal illustration of the truth of Sir J. Kaye's opinion that the spirit of the Indian services, both civil and military, is almost always in favour of war. The telegram published in the *Daily News* of November 1st is as follows :—

"SIMLA, Thursday night (Oct. 31, 1878).

"The formal decision of the Viceregal Council was made to-day in full self-consciousness of bitter humiliation. The following is the succinct story of this blow to its prestige :—

"At the Cabinet Council on Friday last (Oct. 25) the formal decision was telegraphed to despatch an Ultimatum to the Ameer. At the Viceregal Council held here on Saturday (Oct. 26), there was a unanimous agreement to urge the reconsideration of the matter on the Home Government. Representations were made with an earnestness seldom characterising official communications, the Viceroy throwing all his personal weight into the scale. A continuous interchange of telegrams followed, and yesterday (Oct. 30) there was good hope of a successful issue. The Viceregal Council assembled this morning (Oct. 31) to give effect to the final resolve of the Home Cabinet, which adheres meanwhile to its decision as telegraphed.

"The emissary despatched on Monday (Oct. 28), bearing the Ultimatum as prescribed by the Cabinet, was instructed to receive at a point *en route* a telegram bidding him go on or stop, as the final resolve might dictate. Thus three days are saved. The emissary proceeds towards the frontier to await his application for admission to Cabul. It is hoped here that the Ameer will forbid his entrance, and decline all communication with him."

It is impossible not to ask how this correspondent

came to be informed on the 1st of November of the decision which we now know was actually taken by the Cabinet on the 25th of October. It is impossible to suppose that telegrams so delicate and important were sent otherwise than in cipher. Is it possible that the Viceroy and the Government of India communicated all these messages to the representatives of the press, and thus appealed to the popular opinion of the Indian services against the decision of Her Majesty's Government?

But now, once more, we emerge into the light of official day. When the curtain rises on the work of those five days we find the Cabinet sending to the Viceroy, on the 30th of October, an Ultimatum Letter,* which was to be sent to the Ameer. It does not seem certain whether the first draft of this letter was drawn up by the Viceroy or by the Cabinet. The original authorship of the draft matters not. We have the "Text of letter, as approved." The Cabinet is, therefore, responsible for every line, and for every word. Let us see what it says.

The very first sentence sets forth unfairly the purposes of the Mission on which the Viceroy had intended to send Sir Lewis Pelly to Cabul. It is a repetition of the "ostensible pretexts" which the Indian Secretary and the Viceroy had together devised to cover the secret objects of that Mission. It pretends that it was a Mission of disinterested friend-

* Ibid., No. 66, p. 254.

ship towards the Ameer, whereas it was a Mission intended to provide against "a prospective peril to British interests"* by forcing on the Ameer a measure which we were pledged not to force upon him.

But the second sentence of this Cabinet letter is a great deal worse. It asserts, in the first place, that the Ameer left the Viceroy's proposal "long unanswered." It asserts, in the second place, that the Ameer refused that proposal on two grounds, one of which was "that he could not answer for the safety of any European Envoy in his country."

Neither of these assertions is true. The Ameer did not leave the Viceroy's letter "long unanswered;" and when he did answer it, he did not ground his refusal on the plea that he could not answer for the safety of an Envoy.† The facts are these: The letter of the Viceroy proposing the Mission, dated May 5th, reached Cabul on the 17th of May, 1876,‡ and was probably not brought before the Ameer till the 18th. Shere Ali's answer was dated May 22nd,§ and we happen to know from our own Agent that it was the result of deliberations in his Durbar, which (apparently for the very purpose of avoiding delay), we are expressly told, were held "continuously" for the four days which intervened.‖

---

* Instructions to Lord Lytton, Ibid., p. 156.

† Simla Narrative, para. 23. ‡ Afghan. Corresp., I., 1878, p. 166.

§ Ibid., No. 36, Inclos. 7, p. 174.

‖ Ibid., Inclos. 8, p. 176.

So much for the truth of the first assertion made by the Cabinet in the second paragraph of the Ultimatum. Now for the second.

In the Ameer's answer of May 22nd there is not one word about the safety of a British Envoy in his country. His refusal to receive, or at least his desire to postpone indefinitely, the reception of a British Mission is put wholly and entirely upon a different ground—which, no doubt, it was not convenient for the Cabinet to notice. The reason assigned by the Ameer was the very simple one, that he was perfectly satisfied with the assurances given to him by Lord Northbrook at Simla in 1873, and that he did not desire any reopening of negotiations upon the subject to which those assurances referred.

The reckless unfairness with which the Ameer of Cabul has been treated by Her Majesty's present Government throughout the transactions which have resulted in war, could not be better illustrated than by this Cabinet Ultimatum. In this case the Cabinet has not even the excuse of having been led astray by similar recklessness on the part of the Viceroy. In the 23rd paragraph of his Simla Narrative he tells this particular part of the story with substantial correctness. He does not accuse the Ameer of leaving his letter "long unanswered." On the contrary, he speaks of the reply as having come "shortly afterwards." But it is much more important to observe that Lord Lytton states, as fairly as the Cabinet

states unfairly, the grounds of objection taken by the Ameer:—"On the ground," says Lord Lytton, "that he desired no change in his relations with the British Government."* Lord Lytton also states with fairness that the argument about the safety of Envoys, which is not even mentioned by the Ameer, appears only as one among several "additional reasons" which were reported by our Native Agent as having been used in Durbar during the "continuous" discussion of several days' duration.

But the unfairness and inaccuracies of the Cabinet Ultimatum do not end even here. It proceeds thus: "Yet the British Government, unwilling to embarrass you, accepted your excuses." Was there ever such an account given of such transactions as those of the Viceroy, subsequent to the receipt of the Ameer's reply? So far from "accepting his excuses," the Government of India, after leaving that reply "long unanswered"—out of pure embarrassment as to what to do—began addressing to the Ameer a series of letters and messages, one more imperious and insulting than another, until, as we have seen, they ended by suspending all diplomatic relations with him, and were now about to declare war against him because he claimed his right to consider as binding upon us the pledges of the British Crown.

I confess I cannot write these sentences without

* Simla Narrative, para. 23, p. 166.

emotion. They seem to me to be the record of sayings and of doings which cast an indelible disgrace upon our country. The page of history is full of the Proclamations and Manifestoes of powerful Kings and Governments who have desired to cover, under plausible pretexts, acts of violence and injustice against weaker States. It may well be doubted whether in the whole of this melancholy list any one specimen could be found more unfair in its accusations, more reckless in its assertions, than this Ultimatum Letter, addressed to the Ameer of Cabul, by the Cabinet of the Queen.

I repeat here that, holding, as I do, that we cannot allow Russian influence and power to be established in Afghanistan, I hold also, as a consequence, that Her Majesty's Government could not acquiesce in the position in which they would have been placed by the acceptance at Cabul of the Russian Mission, followed by a refusal on the part of the Ameer to receive a Mission from the British Crown. But they were bound to remember that they had themselves brought the Russian Mission upon the Ameer, and upon ourselves; and they were equally bound to consider that Shere Ali was not refusing to accept a Mission from the Viceroy, but was, on the contrary, expressing his opinion that "a personal interview with a British Mission would adjust misunderstandings." All that the Ameer desired was that this Mission should not be forced upon him by open violence in the sight of all

his officers and of all his people. They knew that he did not complain of the determination of the Indian Government to send an Envoy, but only of the "blustering" messages to himself and to his officers by which he had been incessantly plied even during his days of grief. They knew that if ever there had been real mourning in the world it must have been the mourning of Shere Ali for Abdoolah Jan. For this boy he had sacrificed whatever of affection and of fidelity is possible among the children of a harem. With this boy at his side, he had sat enthroned, as an equal, beside the Queen's Viceroy at Umballa. For this boy he had spent his years in endeavouring to procure a dynastic guarantee from the Government of India. Now, all these memories and all these ambitions had vanished like a dream. No prospect remained to him but the hated succession of a rebellious son. Well might Shere Ali say, as he did say, in his letter of October 6th:* "In consequence of the attack of grief and affliction which has befallen me by the decree of God, great distraction has seized the mind of this supplicant at God's threshold. The trusted officers of the British Government, therefore, ought to have observed patience and stayed at such a time." Unless the Government desired to force a quarrel, and were glad of an opportunity to rectify a "haphazard frontier"

* Afghan. Corresp. II., 1878, p. 18.

by means of war, there is nothing to be said in defence of the unjust and indecent haste with which they pushed up the Mission to Ali Musjid even before the forty days of mourning were expired. It cannot be pretended that there was any danger from Russia then. In the meantime our own position had not long before been described by Lord Lytton himself as a position in which we were "able to pour an overwhelming force into Afghanistan for the vindication of our own interests, long before a single Russian soldier could reach Cabul."* The haste with which the extreme measure of war was hurried has crowned and consummated the injustice of the previous transactions, and even if the war had been ultimately inevitable, which it was not, the Government cannot escape censure for the conduct from which the supposed necessity arose.

Unjust and impolitic as I think the conduct of the Government has been in the East of Europe, it has been wisdom and virtue itself in comparison with its conduct in India. I venture to predict that the time is coming, and coming soon, when the reply of Lord Lytton to the statement of the Afghan Envoy at Peshawur, will be read by every Englishman with shame and confusion of face. In a way, but in a very humiliating way, the whole of these transactions carry us back to the days of Clive. We

* Ibid., p. 183.

are reminded only too much of the unscrupulousness of his conduct. But we are not reminded, even in the least degree, of the violence of his temptations, or of the splendour of his achievements. There has not been, indeed, any such daring fraud as duplicate Treaties, one genuine and the other counterfeit—one on white paper and the other upon red. But, in a timid way, the Draft Treaty which was to be offered to the Ameer, as compared with the representations of it made to him in the instructions to Sir L. Pelly, and in the letter of Captain Grey—comes very near the mark. On the other hand, the Government of India has had none of the excuses which have been pleaded on behalf of Clive. We have not had to deal with any dangerous villains whose own treachery was double-dyed, and who might hold our fate in the hollow of their hand. There has been no Surajah Dowlah, and no Omichund. Shere Ali is a half-barbarian, but his relations with Lord Mayo showed that he could respond to friendship, and could be secured by truth. His Minister was straightforwardness itself when compared with the English Viceroy. It seems almost like the profanation of a great name to compare anything lately done by the Government of India with the deeds done by the genius of Clive. But I speak of what was bad or doubtful in his conduct, not of what was great. In this aspect of them the proceedings I have recorded have been worse than his. In the

first place, Clive was only the agent of a "Company," and even that Company was not really responsible for his proceedings. The Viceroy now represents the Sovereign, and all his doings are the doings of the Ministers of the Queen. In the second place, the earlier servants of the Company were not the inheritors of obligations of long standing, or of relations with native Princes well understood and regulated by solemn Proclamations of the Imperial Crown. Lord Lytton was bound by all these, and by traditions of conduct handed down through a long roll of illustrious names. From these traditions he has departed in matters of vital moment. The Government of India has given way to small temptations—to ungenerous anger at cutting but truthful answers, and to unmanly fears of imaginary dangers. Under the influence of these, it has paltered with the force of existing Treaties; it has repudiated solemn pledges; it has repeated over and over again insincere professions; and it has prepared new Treaties full of "tricky saving clauses." Finally, it has visited on a weak and unoffending native Sovereign in Asia, the natural and necessary consequences of its own incoherent course in Europe. The policy which brought the Russian army to the gates of Constantinople is the same policy which brought the Russian Mission to Cabul.

It is always in the power of any Executive Government to get the country into a position out of

which it cannot escape without fighting. This is the terrible privilege of what, in the language of our Constitution, is called the Prerogative. It is, in reality, the privilege of every Executive, whether of monarchical or of popular origin. I am not one of those who are of opinion that it could be lodged elsewhere with any advantage, or even with any safety. The majorities which support a strong Government in power are invariably more reckless than the Ministry. In this Eastern Question, wrong and injurious as I think their policy has been, it has been wise and moderate as compared with the language of many of their supporters in both Houses of Parliament. I have too vivid a recollection of the difficulty which was experienced by the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen in moderating within reasonable bounds the excitement of the country, to place the smallest confidence in any scheme for checking, through some popular agency, the action of the responsible advisers of the Crown. They are always, after all, through a process of "natural selection," the ablest men of the party to which they belong. Except under very rare conditions, they are more disposed, and are more able, to look all round them, than any other body in the State. They may commit—and in this Eastern Question it is my contention that they have committed—terrible mistakes, both in Europe and in India. These mistakes—and errors much more serious than mistakes—I have endeavoured to expose in the present volumes. Some of

them affect the gravest considerations of public duty. They affect the permanent interests of this country and of India, as involved in the good faith and honour of the Crown. I now leave this review of them to the conscience of my countrymen, and to the judgment of later times.

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND HANSON
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

00027170

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018